

**Judgment, Mercy and the Coming Peace of God**  
**Micah 3:1-4:5**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**INTRO:**

**Today's message is not about sex!**

**Micah 6:8: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does The Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

As we move through this passage today and consider the rulers of Micah's time, and as we consider the rulers of our own time, **we should also consider ourselves, and Jesus.**

**What is good and what does the Lord require?**

1. **Do justice.**
2. **Love kindness.** ("mercy" in NIV and KJV)
3. **Walk humbly with God.**

Sounds good, doesn't it. We'd all agree those goals are good and that God is right in expecting his people to do them. **So what's the problem?**

**Why don't we do justice, and love mercy and walk humbly with God?**

**What about you? How are you at... "doing justice" and "loving mercy" and "walking humbly with God?"**

The truth is **we need the prophetic message of Micah**—now as much as ever. We need to hear of God's **certain justice**, but we also need to hear of his **mercy** and the **peace** that only He can establish and sustain.

**Injustice, cruelty, racism, hate, pride, arrogance, greed, oppression, slavery...**these evils are not new, but they're also not old. God's command and call through his prophet Micah that his people do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with him is a timeless expectation.

Today we will see and hear that **the kings, prophets and priests of Judah and Israel fell woefully short of God's standards** for leaders, leaders that should have spoken and acted and walked with **justice, mercy and humility.**

And for their injustice they would receive justice. They received **indictments, judgment and condemnation from God through his true prophet Micah.** **Country boy Micah** stood up and condemned the injustice, oppression and corruption of his day, and He promised the **coming judgment** of God. But judgment is not all he promised. He also promised a **coming kingdom**, a kingdom ruled by a perfectly just and merciful King, a kingdom filled with God's gathered people, a kingdom where peace would have no end (**Isa. 9:7**).

**Main Point: Expect, Embrace and Enjoy the Justice, Mercy and Peace of God.**

Today's message will follow a similar pattern to last week: **2/3 judgment, 1/3 mercy** (peace and hope). Just **two points** today, one each from **Chapters 3 & 4.**

**1) EXPECT THE JUSTICE OF GOD (3:1-12)**

**Count on it. Look for it. Trust in it. God's justice WILL be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).**

God is perfectly holy and just (**Exod. 15:11; Lev 11:44; Ezek. 36:22-23; Luke 4:34; Rev. 16:2**). Therefore, He must

condemn injustice, pride, oppression, cruelty and lack of mercy. All of it is in profane opposition to Him and his character. **The injustice of man will be met with the justice of God.**

In **Ch. 3** we have a judicial indictment and judgment of the nation's leaders, including it's **wicked kings, false prophets and selfish priests**. And by extension it's an indictment against all those who rule unjustly and oppressively for selfish gain. **God will not allow such oppression and corruption to continue perpetually.**

**Micah**, as God's spokesman, by the Spirit of the Lord and on behalf his people, issues indictments, judgments and sentences. **Ch. 3** is a **divine covenant lawsuit**. **And in this lawsuit there is a series of 3 indictments, judgments and sentences**

**1<sup>st</sup> Indictment & Judgment (vv. 1-3): The Ruthless Rulers Have Abused their Power and the People.**

The kings, judges and other civil leaders are guilty of injustice, oppression, cruelty, indifference and idolatry.

***1 I said: Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Is it not for you to know justice?***

**Vv. 1:** Micah begins with indicting rhetorical question: ***"Should you not know justice?"*** It's rhetorical because the answer is obvious and Micah isn't really looking for a response. If anyone should know the meaning of justice, it is those who have the responsibility of leadership and governing justly.

***2 you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, 3 who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.***

**Vv. 2-3:** Micah then describes the civil leaders as cannibals, using very **gruesome imagery**. Instead of **shepherding** the people as God-fearing leaders, these guys have been **exploiting and oppressing** the people—treating them like animals, animals being butchered, cooked, and prepared for eating.

**In contrast:**

**Exodus 18:21** lists the **qualifications of judges** for God's people:

- They should have the **aptitude** ("**able men**") for governing themselves and others well.
- They should also be **God-fearing, trustworthy, and hate a bribe** (not corrupt).

**1 Kings 2:2b-4** lists the **duties of a king** (David to Solomon): ***Be strong, and show yourself a man, 3 and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, 4 that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'***

But these leaders didn't live up to **Ex. 18:21** or **1 Kings 2** or **Micah 6:8**. Instead Micah describes them (metaphorically) as: **"brutal butchers who cannibalized God's people and skinned them alive."**

**Why does Micah use such gruesome imagery of cannibalism?** Because that's how bad their oppression and injustice was! The result of their corruption and evil deeds was that God's people suffered—horribly.

**Prov. 30:14:** ***There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.***

**Loving God's law and discerning what's right** should be **the joy of those in leadership**, but the **rulers of Micah's day** exhibited a **total disrespect for God, his Law and the requirement to "do justice" on behalf of the people**. The people who should have known better couldn't have done worse.

They **"hated the good and loved the evil"**. They didn't just **"not meet expectations."** They did the **opposite** of what was expected of them, and they **loved it**. **The loved the evil of oppression, injustice and cruelty and hated the good of God's justice and mercy.** **How can a good and just God let that stand?**

**Isa. 5:20:** *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

**Isa. 59:2–4:** *<sup>2</sup> but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. <sup>3</sup> For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness. <sup>4</sup> No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.*

**Summary:** You have failed to do justice and love mercy and walk with God. You hate the good and love the evil. You have failed God and his people. Your callous disregard for people has caused their suffering and impending exile. You are like savage cannibals; your evil consumes my people.

**Good thing we've improved from Micah's day, right?** Good thing that as a result of the **enlightenment**, and all our **technological advancement, modernization and sophistication**, we've "evolved" from such evils. **No**, sadly, that's not true. The truth is all our enlightenment and technology and modernization has provided the **opportunity** for more efficient killing, torture and oppression.

### **Illustration: Modern-Day Injustice List**

**Application:** Let's not hear Micah indictments with prideful indifference or disdain. Let's hear them in somber humility, aware that we are capable of and commit injustice that profanes and offends God.

### **Sentence: Separation from God. (4)**

*<sup>4</sup> Then they will cry to the Lord, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil.*

When their **day of judgment** comes—and it will—in their time of need these **guilty rulers** will **cry out** to the **Lord** for help, but **He will not respond**. **His silence will be their sentence**. The Lord will hide his face from them. They will not receive his of favor or blessing. **Their injustice will result in alienation and exile from God.**

**Summary:** He will not speak to you. He will not allow you to see him. You will not be in his presence and behold his glory. You have not walked with God therefore He will not walk with you.

**Application:** What about you? Have you been or are you oppressive or unjust? Be honest with yourself, and God, and repent. And maybe you haven't committed overt acts of injustice but you look the other way, you're apathetic, you don't bother yourself to do anything to stop it (even when it's right in front of your face). What have you done for an orphan, or widow or a slave or the hungry or the homeless or the abused? What have you done for the "least of these" that suffer injustice? If the answer is not much, or nothing, listen to Micah's words, repent, and **"do justice."**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Indictment & Judgment: The Profiteering Prophets Are Guilty of Selfishness, Corruption and Deception. (5)**

*<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry "Peace" when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.*

These **profit-seeking prophets** proclaim all is well, it's all good, nothing bad's going to happen, you're going to prosper—as long as they receive what they ask for. **They are guilty of flagrant misuse of their prophetic office.** Those who “fed” the prophets (with food or fees) received a word of **“Peace”** (good news & affirmation). But the poor, unable to “feed” the greedy prophets, received angry, abusive and probably condemning words (**“war”**). These **profiteering prophets** did not speak the truth of God's words, they spoke their own – for their own good. They were **prostitutes, not prophets.**

**Summary:** You have failed to prophesy truth. You serve yourself, not God.

**Brown:** “the perversion of the ministerial office still runs rampant today.”

**Illustration:** Televangelists of the 80's and 90's & prosperity gospel preachers of today. These are our “peace prophets” who seldom speak of sin, plead & beg for your money (maybe in exchanged for a prayer cloth or some other trinket), and often are personally prosperous.

**Sentence: Silence and shame. (6-7)**

***<sup>6</sup> Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; <sup>7</sup> the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God.***

**In Darkness:** As with the “ruthless rulers” **God's silence will be their sentence.** They will be in **spiritual and prophetic darkness, without vision, without revelation** from God.

**Disgraced:** Their predictions will be **unreliable** and their words **inaccurate**, therefore they will be disgraced and discredited as prophets, leading to their **shame. Though they hold a high position, God will bring them low.**

**Illustration:** Prophets who that predict (with certainty) the time of the rapture, Jesus returning, or end of the world, or aliens coming.

**In contrast: The Genuine Prophet of God Declares Truth With Divine Authority. (8)**

***<sup>8</sup> But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.***

**Micah distinguishes himself from the profiteering prophets.** Though his was from the **boondocks** and didn't have the pedigree or prestige, he had **all he needed** to speak God's Word and do God's will. He was **filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with the power, justice and might of the Lord.**

**Walt Kaiser:** “Micah does not boast about his own aptitudes, but focuses instead on the Lord who sent him and on the four gifts that God gave him in order to do the job he was sent to do.

**Application:** God's people, genuine Christians, though they may differ in aptitudes, have these same gifts. We can and should remember and rely on the fact that, as with Micah, the Holy Spirit is with us and fills us. And therefore we too can speak God's Word and do his will, with his power, justice and might. And given that truth, we are able to serve Him and our suffering neighbor.

**Joshua 24:14:** ***And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”***

**3<sup>rd</sup> Indictment & Judgment: The Godless Gaggle Are Guilty of Injustice, Oppression, Corruption and Defiance. (9-11)**

General and comprehensive indictment, adding priests.

**[don't read]** ***<sup>9</sup> Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, <sup>10</sup> who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. <sup>11</sup> Its heads give judgment***

*for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the Lord and say, "Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."*

### **5 Charges in the Indictment:**

- 1) You detest justice (v. 9).** *Detest:* abhor, despise, desecrate. You **desecrate justice**.
- 2) Your corruption corrupts (v. 9).** *Make all the straight crooked:* "twist/pervert the right." You **hate the good and love the evil**. And because you are in positions of influence and power, your crookedness affects those people and institutions you have influence over. **Your perversion perverts**. You eat of bread made with (1 Cor. 5:8b) "**the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil**" and tragically your little leaven is leavening the whole lump of a nation.
- 3) You build your "kingdoms" through oppression and violence (v. 10).** Like the pharaohs of Egypt, you **use and abuse the people** for your kingdom building projects. You build through oppression, driven by selfish pride and ambition—not for God's glory and sake of his name.
- 4) Your favor can be purchased (v. 11).** You demand & accept bribes for your favorable rulings. You are for sale, and for the right price people get your grace. **You're a prostitute not a leader**.
- 5) You presume on God's favor (v. 11).** You believe you have some kind of "**special immunity**" from the judgments of God and that He owes you his **protection and blessing**, in spite of your **injustice and oppression**.

**Application:** Aren't we prone to do the same today, believing God owes this country his protection and blessing? Be honest. Don't we often believe we Americans are special, and that surely he wouldn't let us suffer too much, or for too long, because after all...we're his favorite and He owes us. **Sign: God blessed America because America blessed God.**

Truth is too often we **presume on his grace**, believing He has an **obligation to bless** our country, our churches and other institutions. But **God didn't make a covenant with United States. He made it with his people: those that he has redeemed and rescued, those that He is gathering from all the nations, all the peoples.**

Ultimately, eternally, we're not **special or safe** because we're Americans. **Our country and our constitution will pass away. We're special** because we're created in the God's image, and we're **safe** because he saved us.

**Phil 3:20a: Our citizenship is in heaven.**

**Everyone:** You're special 😊 (not like Stuart Smally, no idea if people like you). You're special because you bear the image of God, even though it is distorted through sin.

**Believer:** You're safe because he's saved you and will never let you go. You are a citizen of his heavenly kingdom.

**Unbeliever:** You too can enjoy the benefits of the Lord's justice and mercy and peace and presence. You too can be a full citizen of a kingdom that is far better and will last far longer than Rome or the US or any other country.

### **Sentence: Suffering and Separation for the People of God. (12)**

This verse is quoted in **Jeremiah 26:18**.

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*

This sentence includes **the people, not just the leaders. The whole nation will suffer and be separated because of the sins of the leaders. Disobedience leads to discipline. Destruction would come to the city and house of the Lord because of the sins of those entrusted with it.**

Sadly but not unexpectedly, as Micah had prophesied, after being overtaken and plundered, **Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.** You can read more about those tragic events in **2 Kings 24**. The people of Judah were exiled, taken into captivity to Babylon, the temple was looted and destroyed, and Jerusalem was destroyed. **The nation's leaders had failed the people and God, and the people suffered.**

We could stop here at the end of **Ch. 3**, but I want to conclude today with Micah's words of **hope and a coming kingdom of justice and peace** found in the **first 5 verses** of **Ch. 4**. In **Ch. 3**, the prophets, priests and kings were indicted, judged, convicted and given their sentences. **Ch. 3** paints a bleak, seemingly hopeless picture. But **Ch. 4** tells gives us hope for peace. Our God is a God of great mercy. He will rescue his people and bring them peace.

## **2) TRUST IN THE PROMISES OF GOD: EXPECT HIS JUSTICE, EMBRACE HIS MERCY AND ENJOY HIS PEACE—FOREVER (4:1-5)**

In **4:1-5** (parallel passage in **Isa. 2:2-5**) we have a **drastic change**: Micah describes a time when a **new Jerusalem** **"would become the center of God's gracious activity to the peoples of the earth"** (McComiskey), a time when He will **gather the nations**, a time when **everlasting peace will reign in a new kingdom**.

Micah tells us all this will take place **"in the latter days."** Not a misspelling of **"later"**. Not just going happen **later**, it's going to happen **"latter"**: meaning these events will occur with the **2<sup>nd</sup> advent the Lord Jesus**, a future **"day"** when he will bring forth justice and peace and gather his people.

### **5 Specific Promises:**

#### **1) A New Jerusalem and the Mountain of the Lord Will Be Established. (1a)**

*<sup>1</sup> It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills;*

#### **2) The Lord Will Gather His People: the Nations. (1b-2a)**

*and peoples shall flow to it, <sup>2</sup> and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."*  
*"By a miraculous magnetism, a river of humanity will flow uphill to worship the one true God" (cf. John 12:32).*

#### **3) The Lord Will Bring Forth Final Justice. (2b-3a)**

*For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away;*

#### **4) The Lord Will Bring Eternal Peace to His People. (3b-4)**

*and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; <sup>4</sup> but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.*

1. **No war:** Weapons won't be needed. Wars will cease, but we will do a little gardening. No nation, no tribe, no terrorist group, no hate group, no dictator, no people, nobody will war against or oppress another. There will be no murder, no war, no genocide, no abuse, no slavery, no trafficking, no one will hurt another. **John Lennon imagined it but he left God out of it.** Lennon missed an important theological truth in "Imagine": **only God can establish perfect peace—we can't no matter how hard we try.** And we shouldn't just dream of it as Lennon did, we can count on it because God promised it.

2. **No fear:** Without the threat of violence or oppression, and with an all-powerful and all-loving King ruling the kingdom, **what will there be to fear?** The people of God, as the Bible tells us hundred of times, will finally be able to truly **"fear not"**, able to do what Jesus says in **Luke 12:32: Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

3. **Rest:** **Because there will be no war and no fear and perfect peace, we will be able to rest.** The vine and tree references may be metaphors but I also think we will do that kind of thing. We will sit by our grape vines and under our trees, and rest. And when it's supper time, we have seat at the table of the King and the feast will be better than we can imagine.

As **Revelation 21-22** tells us, those who are in Christ will enter through the city gates, and we will gather by the river flowing with the water of life and we will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life and **we will rest in the presence and peace of God.** **Don't you desire that kind of rest, that kind of peace?**

#### **5) The People of God Will Walk with Him Forever (5)**

*<sup>5</sup> For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God*

*forever and ever.*

Sounds like **6:8** doesn't it? Not an accident. **After justice has been DONE, the people of God will walk with him FOREVER. Think about that!** The people of God will walk with him forever. Read more about this in **Rev. 21 & 22.**

- **Believer, follower of Christ, child of God:** know and trust this promise, this prophesy: in the "latter days," forever and ever you will be with God, you will be in his presence, and there will be no war, no fear and perfect peace.
- **If you are not a believer and follower of Jesus: you too can have this hope and look forward with confidence to resting in that perfect peace.** Your sins can be forgiven and you can be in paradise with God forever. And you can't do anything to earn that. Just repent of your sins and believe in the gospel of Christ.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

**Micah 6:8: He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does The Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

What it comes to justice, mercy, and humble faithfulness, **how can we do, and love and walk as we should?** Who is capable of such things? **Is there anyone that does justice, loves mercy and walks with God—perfectly?** Not me. Not you. Not the rulers of Israel and Judah. And not any of our presidents, or governors or mayors or judges or social workers or DA's or police officers or professional athletes or any citizen of any ethnicity of this or any other country. Not any Nobel Peace Prize winner, not Gandhi, not Mother Teresa, not the Pope, not any pastor or priest.

**No person, no people has ever, or will ever, faultlessly meet the standard of **Micah 6:8**—with one exception: Jesus.**

**We all fall short**—some more than others—but **He does not.** In his life He walked in perfect humble submission to the Father, and in his death he mercifully loved his people so much (**John 3:16**) that he accepted the just condemnation and wrath they deserve...just condemnation for their—our—lack of justice, mercy, humility and other sins. Unlike the rulers of Judah, Israel and those of our own time, **Jesus, our perfect prophet, priest and king** took the condemnation and wrath his people deserved. He graciously gives the mercy and peace we desperately need but don't deserve.

Judah's and Israel's leaders failed, and our fail too, but there is a shepherd king and great high priest that will **never fail**, One who **loves mercifully** and **does justice righteously.** **Isaiah** says of this coming king and priest:

***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.***

***Isa. 42:1-4: Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup> He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isa. 9:6-7)***

2000 years ago an **innocent** man, Son of God, who did not sin, was persecuted and killed by a tyrannical and oppressive government and religious leaders that spoke of God and presumed on his favor, but did not understand or live by his Word. This man suffered, died and was buried at the hands of those who wrongly thought they were "doing justice."

He was beaten, his flesh torn, his head pierced by thorns, his feet and hands driven through with spikes; He was mocked and spat upon; He was hung on a tree to suffocate to death under the pressing weight of his own body. And then to be sure He was dead, He was pierced.

This is what became of that baby born in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago, the promised Messiah born to a virgin girl, the one born in a manger among animals because there was no room for him with the people, the one heralded by beautiful angels and worshipped by humble shepherds. Baby Jesus grew up, and was the One who would take the punishment due his people. The Father gave his Son to suffer for the sins of the world, to take the punishment his people deserved, to die the death they should have died, so their exile might end and they inherit the eternal life and enjoy the peace they don't deserve.

Jesus is the perfect great high priest and King over all creation and a coming kingdom. His judgment is perfect and certain. His merciful love is lavishly gracious and will NEVER fail. His kingdom will endure forever. And for those that love him, they will see his face, hear his voice, praise his name and enjoy his peace and joy forever.

Jesus did not stay in that grave. He rose 3 days later, ascended to heaven and sits now at the Father's right hand. And praise God, He's coming back...

*Rev. 21:1-4; 22-27: <sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

*<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. <sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, <sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. <sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. <sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*