

Micah 2:1-13 The Cure for Greed Falls Church AM 11/17/24

The story is told about a farmer who was not satisfied with his life. He wanted more of everything. One day he received an offer. For only 1000 rubles, he could buy all the land that he could walk around in a day. The only catch in the deal was that he had to be back at his starting point by sundown. They set it up for the next day. Early the next morning he started out walking at a fast pace. By midday he was very tired, but he kept going, covering more and more ground. Well into the afternoon he realized that his greed had taken him far from the starting point! He quickened his pace and as the sun began to sink low in the sky, he began to run, knowing that if he did not make it back by sundown the opportunity to become an even bigger landholder would be lost. As the sun began to sink below the horizon he came within sight of the finish line. Gasping for breath, his heart pounding, he called upon every bit of strength left in his body and staggered across the line just before the sun disappeared. He immediately collapsed, blood streaming from his mouth. In a few minutes he was dead. Afterwards, his servants dug a grave. It was six feet long and three feet wide, six feet deep. The title of the story was: How Much Land Does a Man Need?

**Our sovereign God rescued us from greed, and calls us to put greed to death.**

### **1. How greed brings ruin. (v.1-5)**

Verse 1, “*Woe those who devise wickedness...*” Micah introduced this strong message with prophetic thunder. Why woe to them? Because while they devise wicked plans in verse 1. What wicked plans?

Verse 2, “*they covet fields, and seize them.*” We might call them land sharks. In modern cities, we call them slum landlords who maximize profits by minimizing spending on property maintenance, so that the tenants suffer.

So, Micah said woe to these greedy landlords who devised a wicked way to take those fields.

There was a symmetry here in what the greedy did, and what God did in response. The symmetry is seen in the repeating of the word “devise” and in the repeating of the word “fields.” Verse 1, the greedy were devising or planning. Verse 3, Therefore God was devising or planning. Verse 2, the greedy coveted fields and seized them. At the end of verse 4, the complaint is “*to an apostate he allots our fields.*”

Because the rich landowners took fields from the ordinary citizens of Jerusalem, therefore the Lord would send a hostile foreign army to take the promised land from them.

They broke the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment, “*You shall not steal.*” (Ex. 20:15)

But it started when they broke the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment. The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is You shall not covet. It is the only commandment out of the Ten Commandments in which the command is repeated twice. Listen for it as I read the

10<sup>th</sup> commandment, “*You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.*” (Ex. 20:17)

It started with coveting in their minds. Coveting led to plotting. Plotting led to action. Sometimes in the New Testament, the word greed and the word covetousness are used interchangeably.

Coveting means we want something that we do not have, something that belongs to another person. Coveting is not being satisfied with what God has already given us.

When we see someone that has better clothes, better vehicle, better phone, don’t we sometimes wish it was ours?

First we tell ourselves that we should be content. Then, we tell ourselves that we should buy it, because we are worth it! We struggle to remain at peace with what we have. As sinners, we wake up each day seeking more.

## **2. How rejecting God’s Word brings foolishness. (v.6-11)**

Verse 6 begins to tell us about the reaction that Micah got to his preaching. What would we expect to be the reaction? Opposition! Stop saying that Micah!

Sure enough, look at verse 6, “*‘Do not preach’ – thus they preach – ‘one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us.’*”

Verse 7a, they continued, “*Should this be said, O house of Jacob? Has the LORD grown impatient? Are these His deeds?*”

Do we see who was questioning Micah’s message and telling Micah not to preach this message? It was the other prophets! It was false prophets. The false prophets were providing a religious explanation for how the greedy landowners were behaving.

So, in verse 7b, God answered them, “*Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly? (v.8) But lately My people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war. (v.9) The women of My people you drive out from their delightful houses; from their young children you take away My splendor forever.*”

Verse 8, when the exiles finally did return home, it should have felt like home. The exiles should have felt like they were trustingly and safely returning to their own homelands like men returning from battle. Finally home! But instead, when they returned from exile, what happened? Their fellow Israelites were rising up as enemies to them. The greedy landowners, now supported by the false prophets, destroyed Israel’s families by taking their lands. Verse 8, *you strip the rich robe from such families.* Verse 9, “*the women of My people you drive out from their delightful houses...*” Verse 9, “*from their young children you take away my splendor forever.*” The LORD’s lands, the LORD’s blessings, the LORD’s favor

and riches, were distributed across the whole breadth of the tribes of His nation, but was now concentrated in the hands of a few rich predators.

The rich scammers had robbed families of their farmlands, which had the effect of robbing those people of their homes, their food, their clothes, and even children of their inheritance. And now here came the false prophets to question whether God was right to send judgment against such wicked actions from the scammers.

They thought that they could have one type of relationship to God, and a different type of relationship to people. Their error was assuming that they could have one relationship vertically, and a different relationship horizontally. God showed them this was impossible. If they acted like enemies towards people, they were acting like enemies toward the God who made them!

Jesus taught this same thing in Matthew 25:31-46, that our vertical relationship to God is connected to our horizontal relationship with people. Jesus taught that when we feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, take in strangers, and clothe people, care for the sick, and visit those in prison, we will discover that it was Christ that we were feeding, clothing and providing water to drink.

Now we reach verse 10, *“Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.”*

To whom is Micah speaking? It is an echo of what the landowners used to say to those farming families, *“Arise and go...”* But this time it is God saying this same phrase to the greedy landowners *“Arise and go...”* God here was speaking to the greedy landowners! Because they had ruined the farms and restful lives of families in their own homesteads, so God was saying through Micah that the thieves themselves would suffer restlessness and homelessness. So, the rest of verse 10 is now understood as God speaking to the greedy as they leave saying why they must leave, *“Arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.”*

Because of uncleanness that destroys. Because of greed, God caused even the land itself spits them out! Leviticus 18:25, *“...the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”*

Then in verse 11, we see another feature of the prophets. Cycling back again to something that was written earlier. Here God spoke again through Micah more about the previous topic of these false prophets. The question was – if the people of Judah were not listening to the true prophet Micah, then to what prophets were they listening? The greedy landowners were only willing to accept the words of a prophet who joined them in their greed. Such a false prophet would need to preach a message of wealth and prosperity. Such a false prophet would need to allow his listeners to have a life occupied with filling worldly appetites for money and what money can buy – land and food and drink. The only prophet that the people were

welcoming was a false prophet who was blowing hot air as he predicted for them that God would continuously supply land, and that land would continuously supply the crops needed for wine and other strong drink. In other words, the false prophets would predict an abundance of alcohol for them to drink! Listen to God speaking through Micah in verse 11, *“If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,’ he would be the preacher for this people!”*

What did God see that the people wanted? They wanted land so that they could grow grapes for wine and more wine and create an endless drunken party until the end, when God would destroy them all. Did we mistakenly think that a constant craving for drunken parties was only a modern problem? This verse reveals that it was also an ancient problem. It is a problem that will continue consistently until God judges the world in the final day. Just as these people looked for religious permissions for their greed and land grabbing, so also they would welcome a prophet who would give religious permissions for their excessive drinking. The false prophets were glad to provide such support – for a fee. The false prophets joined in the greed, and received money also.

### **3. How God rescues a remnant from the ruins. (v.12-13)**

Before we read verse 12, please notice that there is a sudden and extreme change in tone. Here there was good news on which the families of Israel could focus. God gathering them for restoration! Instead of certain judgment, here the new topic is certain restoration!

Listen to verses 12, *“I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men.*

Here in verse 12, God was suddenly comforting those families by telling them here to keep their eyes on what would be coming later! One fine day, when God makes everything right, these remnant families of Israel would have stable rest and abundant blessings, and especially they will enjoy the best blessing – a gathering of God’s people enjoying the presence of The LORD God Himself.

How could that happen? What would be needed in order for God to supply what God was promising here in verse 12? The answer is in verse 13.

What God gave the people that day to comfort them was the truth that what they saw that day was not the whole of reality yet.

The one who rules the future was promising to come in the future in order to gather His remnant. He promised to reign over the future. Regardless of the present for the suffering families, the way was bright for those who waited for that coming and that kingdom and that King.

Listen to verse 13, *“He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head.”*

The last verse showed 3 stages of God’s future gathering of His remnant.

The first stage of God’s future gathering of the remnant was at the beginning of verse 13, *“He who opens the breach goes up before them...”* This referred to the King, the Shepherd-King, who would need to go up to battle ahead of the remnant.

The second stage of God saving the remnant was in the middle of verse 13, *“...they break through and pass the gate, going out by it.”* The gate is the key word. Remember that the danger had reached up to the gate of Jerusalem, as we read back in Micah 1:9, and again in Micah 1:12? Here God is promising that in His future salvation and gathering, that they will break through that gate and pass through that gate and go out by that gate!

The third stage of God gathering the remnant is at the end of verse 13, *“Their King passes on before them, The LORD at their head.”* The LORD God promised that He Himself would take His rightful position as their King and as the leader or head of their traveling group, and that He Himself would protect them every step of the way as they made their journey home from exile to their assigned lands.

God’s promise to gather the remnant was initially fulfilled in the LORD God’s miracle of deliverance from the army of the invading Assyrians.

But there is more. Micah will write about it in Micah 5:1-2, *“Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”*

When the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, then the prophecies of Micah to the remnant began to be fulfilled!

More fulfillment of Micah’s prophecies happens after Christ’s birth in Bethlehem. As the birth of the Lord Jesus is told and re-told, we celebrate these fulfillments each year. But as we consider Micah 2:13, there is more than just his birth! As the growth of the baby Jesus into the boy Jesus and then the man Jesus happens, then Jesus takes up His role as our King. The unfolding ministry of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, show us increasing fulfillments of God’s promises to the remnant through Micah 2:13.

Jesus is fulfilling all 3 stages. 1) He has opened the breach to go before us into the earthly city of Jerusalem. 2) He has broken through and passed the gate of the earthly Jerusalem. 3) He has passed on before us into Heavenly Jerusalem. As the Lord Jesus Christ, King of His Kingdom gathers His remnant in His church each Lord’s Day to assemble as sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, He

prepares us for that one final day when He will come gather the remnant by faith, and pass on before us into heaven, taking us to our allotted place in the heavenly promised land.

**Conclude:**

The love of money can be found in a mansion, and it can be found in subsidized housing.

The love of money can be found in the owner a brand new luxury car, and it can be found in the owner of a rusty bicycle.

Jesus died and rose again to rescued us from the love of money.

Jesus cautioned us to put it to death.

Colossians 3:5, *“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away...”*

Jesus showed us, the remnant, that the cure for greed is His death and resurrection, which results in this victorious attitude in 1 Timothy 6:6, *“...godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19-20, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*