

Micah 4:1-13 The Road to Restoration Falls Church AM 12/1/24

As we saw previously in chapter 3, Micah warned that the ancient city of Jerusalem would fall because of corrupt leaders. Here in chapter 4, Micah predicted restoration – that the future city of Jerusalem will stand because of the good leader Jesus providing restoration to His remnant people. Therefore, the people should have great hope.

Micah's goal was to warn God's people to repent and return to the LORD, and to place their hope in Him.

Christ our Shepherd-King was born unto us, taught us, was crucified for us, and rose again for us in order to provide us with the road to restoration.

1. Envisioning the church of Jesus: God's plan for restoring the nations and protecting His people. (v.1-5)

There is an incredible shift from chapter 3 to chapter 4.

Temple. Chapter 3 ended with the phrase "*the mountain of the house*" (3:12) and chapter 4 begins with the same phrase "*the mountain of the house.*" (4:1) In chapter 3:12, Micah was writing about the destruction of the temple hill, and in the very next verse, chapter 4:1, he wrote about the exaltation of the mountain of the LORD's temple.

Formerly, only the people of Israel worshipped the God of Israel at Jerusalem. But this vision for the future adds many more worshippers from many more nations. Listen to verse 2, "...*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..."*"

Verse 2 goes on to tell us why the worshippers would come from many nations. What were the nations missing? They were missing justice. Remember in chapter 3 the pervasive problem of unjust leaders, and the hint was that the Spirit of The LORD filled Micah with justice! So, the nations were discovering that the source of justice was the God of Micah! That is what the nations were missing! Now in a more grand style in chapter 4, verse 3, The LORD "...*shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away...* (and in verse 4)...*for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*" The nations were discovering that The Sovereign LORD God of Israel always deals fairly and justly with all nations.

What are the nations seeking as they would come to the mountain of The LORD, to the temple of God? The peoples, like the wise men later in following the star to where Jesus was born, were seeking God's wisdom and God's ways. The nations come to the house of the God of Jacob what seeking true justice and more, "...*that [the God of Jacob] may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.*"

Verse 2b, the movement of people toward Jerusalem is now reversed – now something moving out and away from Jerusalem. Centripetal force is reversed to centrifugal force. What is going out from Jerusalem? The answer is in verse 2b, *“For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”*

This is later fulfilled by Jesus as he famously said in Matthew 28:18-20, *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* In the church, God teaches His ways to the nations!

The travesty of chapter 3 was that justice was not known within the courts of Jerusalem during the days of Micah, so it is fitting that the road to restoration included the LORD making His own name renowned for true justice around the world. No more bribery. No more fixed verdicts. The world knew that they could be sure of finding justice if they turned to God’s teachings, His law, His Word.

Once the disputes were settled, there would be no need for instruments of war. No more military basic training camps. The valuable metal wasted in military attack and military defense and military swords will be metal that was instead needed and used in order to plow the fields. The peaceful peoples will no longer be overcome with greed, but instead sharing and even generosity. Each person will feel safe in his own home and safe in his own field. He will sit down under his grape vines or under his fig tree, both poetic pictures of the good life on the good land, and they will not be afraid anymore!

Verse 5, *“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.”* This beautiful scenario is not just a breather from the fighting and war. This is permanent.

2. Gathering the remnant of Jesus: God assembles His sheep who are lame, driven away, and afflicted and He cares for them. (v.6-8)

The people hearing Micah were experiencing life in a difficult city, that was described in chapter 3 - the judges were bad, the prophets were false, and the city rulers detested justice. As a consequence, the community had disintegrated and they had lost the sense of unity and security which were the basis for normal living with justice.

The intervention of the Shepherd would change everything for the sheep. Sheep were injured. Sheep were scattered. Sheep were afflicted. Verse 6, *“In that day, declares the Lord, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.”*

After God would bring them back home to Jerusalem, He would make them into a strong nation. In verse 8, God addressed Zion and spoke directly to her, *“And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.”*

The theme of a shepherd-king caring for his sheep is skillfully continued here in verse 8. Now the restored capital city was called a tower of the flock. From the tower, the shepherd could keep a watch for wild beasts and for sheep-stealers.

Centuries later, Jesus similarly took a look throughout the cities, and Jesus saw the same problems, as we read in Matthew 9:36, *“When [Jesus] saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”* The same problem, and the same compassion from God. The LORD God is the Good Shepherd who sees and knows full well the suffering of His people, and promised restoration and refreshment.

3. The birth of The Rescuer Jesus: God restores by redeeming His people and removing His enemies. (v.9-13)

Verse 9, *“Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor?”*

Here the prediction is if they did not repent and turn to the LORD, then God would send the enemy to attack. Once the enemy attacked, then they would be in panic and distress, and at that time God would remind them of how they had insisted on trusting their own bad kings, false prophets and corrupt city rulers.

Micah was posing these questions in a sarcastic way. Why should they cry now? Why should you be afraid in your new bad circumstances, since they valued their king and his counsels and plans? Why is it a crisis much like pain that seizes a woman in labor? It was because they were suddenly overwhelmed and overpowered! They were not able to cope with the situation!

Then Micah told them that was how they should go ahead and act – go ahead and act as a woman in labor! Why? Because now the situation of God’s judgment will truly justify such a response! Verse 10, *“Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.”*

Now it was appropriate to cry out, to with in agony, and to groan. Step 1) leave the city and Step 2) set up camp in the open field Step 3) go to Babylon! Step 4) wait. Wait for what? Wait for The LORD to rescue. Wait for the LORD to redeem them from their enemies, and bring them back from exile.

Notice in verse 10 the word *“there”* is repeated twice. *“There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.”* Not at home. Not at Jerusalem. God will not restore them at Jerusalem, as they had

pridefully assumed. Instead, God would restore them over there in Babylon. Exile first, then restoration. Death first, then resurrection.

Verse 11, “*Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, ‘Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.’*” In contrast to verse 2, where the nations gathered to Zion for instruction, here in verse 11, the nations gathered to Zion for destruction of her. After the deportations to Babylon, a cosmopolitan army consisting of troops from many nations, each under their own flag, would gather against Jerusalem. The holy city would be defiled when those soldiers would tear down the walls, and the temple, and especially the Most Holy Place of the temple. Then the nations would celebrate their victory, precisely because that city had claimed to represent heaven on earth. That city used to condemn those other nations, but now those nations had overtaken that city. It was validation for the wicked soldiers.

Verse 12, “*But they do not know the thoughts of The LORD; they do not understand His plan, that He has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.*”

A common picture of judgment was sheaves being gathered and made ready for threshing at the threshing floor. These nations were the tools of their own defeat, even though they did not realize it at the time. Later, God would outwit the devil at the cross of Jesus, what seemed like defeat when Jesus died, it was actually victory. Paul said it this way to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, “*...we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*” In the same way, we can say about verse 12 in our text here, that none of the soldiers understood the thoughts of God, for if they had, they would not have attacked the city of Jerusalem. They were unaware of what was really happening: God had gathered them in order to judge them!

Verse 13, “*Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain to The LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.*”

Here God commanded His own people who were blockaded in Jerusalem to get up and go out of Jerusalem and attack the many enemy soldiers gathered around them. The only way to have lasting peace is to have God deal with His enemies. One is coming who will do that. Hint. He will be born in Bethlehem, and He will be a Shepherd.

Conclude:

What we really need is for God to be the judge, God to be the prophet, God to be the priest, God to be our leader. Can we imagine what it would be like if God were central to every aspect of our lives? Micah can imagine it!

We need teaching of God's Word, God's ways, and how to walk in God's paths.

We need freedom from war. Take the resources used to fight, and use them to bless the lives of people. Who keeps on hating and attacking? We need God to change hearts so that warring hearts become hearts of peace.

Once the resources that used to go into war are turned to other projects, there is enough for everyone to have his own land and home, his own vine, his own fig tree, all without fear of theft or robbery or attack.

It is significant that the nations learning God's Word in verse 2 was followed by the absence of war in verse 3.

True peace is based on knowing God through His Word, and the good news of the gospel of grace, by which we can live holy lives of justice according to God's law.

We need God to change hearts, so that greedy hearts instead desire to share.

Who keeps coming up with new scams to rip off people? We need God to change hearts so that scamming hearts become honest hearts.

This chapter 4 was a picture of the kingdom of God, and a prophecy about the church of Jesus. Once we walk in the name of the LORD our God, we will become agents of renewal in the world. We will know justice, and start to bring it to all of life. We will know truth, and share it with everyone. We will know how to bring order out of chaos, and that is what everyone needs. The first step is for each of us to receive God's instruction through His Word, God's transformation of our hearts, God's empowering for us to live it out, with an eye to providing God's justice for all, and God's salvation to all.

SI - Supreme Court Justice Horace Gray once informed a man who had appeared before him in a lower court and had escaped conviction on a technicality, "I know that you are guilty and you know it, and I want you to remember that one day you will stand before a better and wiser Judge, and that there you will be dealt with according to justice and not according to law." That same burglar went right back to stealing. One day, surprised while burgling a house in Antwerp, Belgium, the thief fled out the back door, clambered over a nine-foot wall, dropped down the other side, and found himself in the city prison!

The NT Apostle Paul agreed with the OT prophet Micah in giving hope of restoration, even while still engaged in the spiritual fight for justice and mercy and love and walking in God's name. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 6:12, "...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:10, "...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."