

"God is Always Speaking"

Micah 1

The prophets are probably one of the most ignored sections of the Bible, especially the Minor Prophets. Called 'minor' because they are mostly smaller than the 'Major' prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. But unless they have historical narratives or prophecies about Jesus, we are not always sure how to understand them. And yet, when we understand the basic context of all the prophets it all of a sudden makes sense.

Almost every prophet was sent to a divided Israel (divided as a result of Solomon's divided heart, whose political marriages resulted in bringing idol worship into Israel) to warn the 10 northern tribes or the 2 Southern tribes, that if they persisted in their rebellion against the covenant God made with them through Moses, that He would eventually send a foreign nation and exile them away from the land. And the Northern Kingdom who had no Davidic kings were attacked by Assyria in 722 BC and most were taken away. Then the Southern Kingdom was captured in 605 BC by Babylon, where God extended more grace to the Davidic kings by not destroying Jerusalem and the temple until after a second exile in 597 and then the third and final exile to Babylon in 586.

So every prophet was sent to the north or the south to remind them that God's Word of warning given through Moses in Deut. 28-29 about a potential exile could really happen if they didn't repent. So Hosea to Habakkuk all warned Israel and Judah about exile, while Haggai-Malachi were post exilic prophets who reminded the returned Israelites that exile could happen again if they were to disobey God again.

So Micah was a pre-exilic prophet sent to warn both the north (capital Samaria) and the south (capital Jerusalem) that the Word of God is always speaking to you and if they kept worshipping idols God would remove them from the promised land – for awhile. And that's a very important point to keep in mind. Exile was temporary. God always had in mind to bring them back because He made promises to the nation of Israel through Abraham and Moses that they would have a land and get to enjoy one day in peace and plenty when the Messiah comes. We see the heart of God on the temporariness of exile in Is. 54:7-8

⁷ *"For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. ⁸In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer.*

Last week we finished our series on seeing as Jesus sees with two messages looking at how Jesus saw Himself. As our encourager (standing at the finish line in Heb. 12 cheering us on to finish each leg of the marathon of life well) and as our burden bearer who is gentle and humble in heart, and when we put our trust in Him we experience His rest and peace (Matt. 11:28-30). When we looked at that passage we also looked at the heart of God in Ex. 34:7-8 who said to Moses that He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger abounding in love and faithfulness.

This is an important point as we come to the prophets because we often get the misunderstanding that God is vengeful and wants to punish His people Israel, when in fact He has been slow to anger, graciously sending prophet after prophet for more than 300 years after the

Kingdom divided, pleading with His people to heed His Word. Only when He was provoked by the Ahaz's and Manasseh's did He finally send them into exile and then only for 70 years. So the main point about the prophets, and we see here in Micah, is that God is

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always speaking through His Word. And every time a prophet showed up he just repeated what God has already said through Moses and others:

The Word of God is Unchanging Because God is Totally Faithful **(1:1)**

Micah begins *"The Word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah – the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."*

The main message is God is speaking. The *"Word of the Lord that came"* literally means the word of the Lord happened. That's exactly true. God's Word doesn't just come, it happens. If God says He will do something it will happen. In Micah we will read that God said the Assyrians will come – it happened. And God said the Babylonians will come – it happened. We'll read in Micah 5 that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem – it happened. The Word of God never changes because God never changes and He is faithful to His Word. If He promises blessings it will happen. If He promises exile it will happen. If He promises eternal life to those who believe in His Son and repent of their sins, it will happen. If He promises weeping and gnashing of teeth to those who don't want anything to do with Him, then it will happen because He said it would. People who don't want God in their life will get exactly what they want for all eternity, a life without God. The Word of God is unchanging because God is totally faithful to his Word.

But He needs the Micahs and us to share it with others. What do we know about Micah? He was from Moresheth which was 20+ km southwest of Jerusalem close to the Philistine city of Gath. Moresheth was in the lowlands (called the Shephelah) which was the most prosperous part of Israel. It was the Niagara of Israel. It was one of the best places to live. That means when God called Micah to leave his 'Ottawa valley' home and go to the capital cities of his day (Samaria and Jerusalem) he did. He had to leave his comfort zone in order to share God's Word with others.

We always have to get out of our comfort zone to share God's Word with our neighbour, family member, co-worker or teammate. That's what God has called all of us to do. To leave the safety of our nice home and community and engage people with the Word of God. The Word of God has happened and will continue to happen.

And we also need to share God's Word with our fellow believers. Because the prophets spoke to the people of God about their sin. Its often easier to share God's Word with those who don't know Him at all then it is to have to point out our brother or sister's sin. We're reluctant to do so. We rationalize our unwillingness to graciously confront a brother or sister in sin by saying 'Well, who am I to judge' or 'I don't want to lose our friendship.' Yet God did it all through Scripture. That's the main job of a prophet, to turn God's people back to God. Why does God do that and so why should we do it?

Because if we're growing as a believer into becoming more like God and His Son Jesus then we'll share God's Word with our fellows believer's because

God's Word Constantly Speaks to us Since

God Loves us Too Much to Let Sin Ruin our Lives (1:2-7)

The prophets pointed out the sin of God's people to remind them that,

God sees all sin (vv.2-4)

*Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it,
that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.*

³ *Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place;*

he comes down and treads the high places of the earth.

⁴ *The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart,
like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.*

⁵ *All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem?*

Micah announces that the Lord is coming from His holy place. Normally that is a reference to the temple, yet here he explains that He is coming down from His throne in heaven. The irony here is that one of these 3 kings – Ahaz – tried to shut God out. Ahaz grew up under a godly father, Jotham, yet turned his back completely on God. In 2 Chron. 28 God allowed Ahaz, the southern King, to be defeated by the Northern kingdom (a first because the north was always disobedient). Then God confronted the Northern Kingdom not to mistreat their brothers in the South because they were going to enslave them. Instead, they repented of their sins and sent them back to Judah, clothed and fed! A miracle of God! Did that cause Ahaz to repent of his idolatry? Nope. Instead we read this,

²⁴ *Moreover, when Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, he cut the utensils of the house of God in pieces; and he closed the doors of the house of the LORD and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers, to anger.*

Total defiance! He even closed the doors of the temple, yet Micah says God is coming from His dwelling place. You can't shut God out! He sees all our sins but in His patience and grace

He deals with all sin in His time (vv.6-7)

⁶ *"Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble,
a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.*

⁷ *All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images.*

*Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes,
as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used."*

Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom and they would be attacked by the Assyrians and many eventually taken to Nineveh. That happened in 722 BC. This helps us date Micah. He started his ministry under a fairly good king of the South Jotham who reigned from 750-735. But terrible King Ahaz who ruled from 735 – 716 ignored both Micah and Isaiah even though it was during his reign that the North went to Assyria in 722 BC. So part of Micah's prophecy came true during his ministry. Which you would think would make king Ahaz pay more attention. However, he continued to rebel until he died. Then Hezekiah, the Southern Kingdom's godliest king tried to undo all that his

father Ahaz had done. Yet it was during Hezekiah's reign that the Assyrians came through Judah, capturing the towns that Micah lists from vv.8-15, surrounding Jerusalem. But Hezekiah and Isaiah plead to God for the nation and God miraculously rescues the south from Assyria's threat.

Sadly, Hezekiah's success would be undone during his son Manasseh's reign and eventually the Babylonians would come in 605 BC and fulfil what Micah predicted about the southern kingdom. God deals with sin in His time and way. His temporary reprieve in our life doesn't mean He doesn't see our sin, it means He is gracious, compassionate and long-suffering, not wanting us to suffer the consequences of unconfessed sin, but to repent and return to Him.

Micah then speaks in v.7 and he is grieved by the Word of God and what's coming to His people if they refuse to repent of their sinfulness. We see Micah's heart, his passion for God's people to repent. Like Micah,

Our Desire to Share God's Word is only Matched by our Compassion for God's People (1:8-16)

- ⁸ *Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.*
- ⁹ *For her wound is incurable; it has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.*
- ¹⁰ *Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all.*

Micah is using grieving imagery and language to convey his sorrow over what God's Word says and how it will happen to people who refuse to deal with our sin. Like Micah we must

Grieve with people and pray long for them (vv.8-10)

Do we know a Christian friend whose hurting themselves and others by their sin? Do we care enough about them that we are willing to humbly and graciously share God's truth with them? To tell them that we will all reap what we sow if we're not careful as Paul says in Gal. 6:7-8. V. 9 says not to get weary in doing good, that we will reap a harvest if we don't give up. That includes not giving up on God's people who get caught in sin as well as unbelievers who need to hear the gospel more than once. Micah's ministry would span almost 50 years. His message was consistent. He grieved for Israel and prayed long for them.

Micah then lists small town after small town almost in order of how Sennacherib will make his way towards Jerusalem in 701 BC under Hezekiah's reign. Much like saying look out Lyndhurst, Morton and Elgin, Crosby, Forfar, Newboro and Westport. Judgment is on its way in the way of an attack and ultimately exile, if you don't repent. That word "exile" is the last word in v.16 which brings back reminders of what God said through Moses in Deut. 28:63-68.

The reason why exile was so painful is because it meant Israel would lose out on the blessings God wanted them to have in the land. This is why we need to reach the lost as well as reach out to believers struggling in sin:

So they will experience the blessings of God (vv.11-16)

Whether for the first time as a new believer or as a believer who needs to come back to the Lord who is missing out on God's blessings of peace, fellowship and joy. Exile only lasted 70 years.

But 70 years was a lifetime. That meant some never saw the land again. Some died while in exile. God's promises about the land has never changed but because of Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, most have not been able to enjoy the blessings God meant for them in the land but also the blessings of peace with God.

When a believer refuses to repent of their sin they lack peace in their life. They lose joy and they miss out on the unity within the church family. In a way, our refusal to confess our own sins puts us in an exile of our own. Not geographically but relationally, emotionally and spiritually. The direct application for the book of Micah is a call for God's people to stop living in idolatry, repent of your sin and return to God. That applies to all God's people everywhere. Anything we put ahead of God is a form of idolatry. God is committed to us. That never changes. But when we renege on our commitment to God, He loves us too much to leave us alone. We'll lose out on life's blessings. Our prayers will hit the ceiling. Our relationships will be strained. All that is meant to point us back to God, to repent and get back what we lost and enjoy fellowship with God and His people.

Of course there's also the application to the one who doesn't know God at all. That they never knew they were in spiritual exile, separated from God and needing forgiveness of sins. God loved us so much He sent Jesus to die for our sins so that if we believe in Him we will not perish (consequence of disbelief) but have eternal life. Eternal is an adjective describing the quality of life we can have now. A relationship with God and His family.

Most importantly, we all need to take the Word of God seriously and speak it into people's lives. We're the Micahs of today, called to leave our comfort zones to speak the truth because people are unaware of the consequences of their sins. "But nobody listens!" we think. Did they listen to Micah? I'll let you know next week 😊

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivvet@rideau.net