

A Message of Salvation and Hope

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to our services today, and as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing. Let us pray.

Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks unto thee for the great privilege that thou hast given to us, when we can come together around thine own Word in this act of worship.

Grant to us, O Lord, that we would come with the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving unto thee, for thy goodness and kindness to us in things that are temporal, as well as in things that are spiritual.

Before thee in this act of worship.

[2 : 2 2]

Commit ourselves to serve thee more faithfully. O Lord, thou knowest the challenges of our day, and we pray that thou would grant to each and every one of us the grace to face those challenges.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would bless those who are ill. May thy healing hand be upon them, and those who look after them.

We pray, O Lord, that they may be given the grace and the strength to enable them to continue that work in the midst of all the challenges that confronts them.

We remember the lonely today, and pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst draw near to them. O that they may know that there is one that sticketh closer than any other.

[4 : 4 0] That there is the one who hath promised that he will never leave them, nor forsake them. And may they know thee as their portion this day. Pray for our young people and our children, that thou would raise up a generation that would fear thine own name.

O Lord, we pray for our nation, that thou would have pity upon us, and that in thy compassion thou would turn us once again to be a nation that would look to thine own law, that would look to thy truth.

O Lord, we pray for our leaders, grant them wisdom, and grant to them that they may come to understand that righteousness alone exalted thy nation.

Remember the gospel today, we pray thee, in the hands of thy servants, that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thy spirit, in convicting and converting, and in the building of thine own church.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would remember thy people, grant to them that they may be faithful witnesses for thee, in a world that is so challenging to us.

[5 : 5 2] O may we show forth the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as we go out into the world from day to day. We pray, O Lord, that thou would encourage thy people through thy word.

O may we be strengthened in our faith, and may we go forth as those who walk, worthy of the gospel. We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us as we turn to thy word, to read it and to meditate upon it.

Open our hearts to receive it, O that it may be lodged in our hearts, that it may bring forth evidence in our lives, to the glory and honour of thine own name.

And all that we ask with forgiveness of our sins is in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We shall now read the word of God as we find it in the Old Testament in the prophecy of Micah and chapter 5.

Now gather thyself and troops, O daughter of troops. He hath laid siege against us. They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

[7 : 05] But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is, to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth hath been from of old, from everlasting.

Therefore will he give them up until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth. Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall abide, for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

And this man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come unto our land. And when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men.

And they shall waste the land of Assyria with a sword, and the land of Numrod, and the entrances thereof. There shall he deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh unto our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

[8 : 13] And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a Jew from the Lord, as a showers upon the grass that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots.

And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers.

Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee. And thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. And I will pluck up the groves out of the midst of thee, so will I destroy thy cities.

[9 : 25] And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

And seeking his blessing and help, let us turn to verse 2 of chapter 5 of the prophecy of Micah. Last week we looked at two themes or messages that we find in the book of Micah, namely a message of judgment, which we find throughout the book, and then a message of what God requires of us.

The book of Micah, as we find throughout the teachings of the Bible, declares to us that sin must be punished. Of course, the greatest expression of that is found in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ at Golgotha.

However, we also find in the book a message of salvation and hope. This message is to be found in a few places within the book of Micah.

But today we are going to look at one of his best-known prophecies of salvation and hope, which is the basis of our text this morning. A prophecy announcing the birth of God's Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 12] The message of hope that God will send a Saviour to deliver us from his own judgment on our sin. Now let us just give a brief backdrop to the situation confronting Micah, without hopefully repeating ourselves in what we looked at last week.

When we looked at the theme of judgment for sin. In chapter 1, Micah prophesied the details of the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib, but let us note how Micah begins.

He says, Hear all ye people, hearken, O earth, and all that therein is. He calls not merely on Judah or Israel, but on the earth to attend to God's word.

His call is a universal call. Although God is going to deal with Israel and Judah, nevertheless the prophet summons all the earth, because God's dealings with his covenant people have a vital lesson for us all.

God's dealings with Israel and Judah is of universal importance, for he is speaking to every one of us.

[12 : 33] That great judgment that was to come upon Israel and Judah was the result of God's anger over his people's sin, and so the punishment of Samaria and Jerusalem said as a warning for us as to his future judgment of all the earth.

In other words, it is a warning to us that sin must be punished. We must not think that God is talking about someone other than ourselves.

A lot of people see no relevance in spending time in the Old Testament, as if what happened in the Old Testament bear no relevance to us.

But the truth is otherwise. It is a warning for us all of how God deals with sin. In chapter 4, verse 10, he predicts Judah's Babylonian captivity, which would not happen for over a hundred years.

But we hear a read, For now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon. This took place when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, and when they put the king to death, and when they led the people in chains into Babylon.

[14 : 01] This was spoken of when Babylon was not yet a world power capable of such a conquest. Who would have expected that this captivity would ever take place?

Yet we know that in around a hundred years, that God's word was fulfilled, and Judah was carried into Babylonian captivity.

The Bible always warns us that God's word will be fulfilled. Peter says to us in his second letter in chapter 3, Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?

For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water, whereby the world was then, a wasp being overflowed with water, perished.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now by the same word, are kept in store, reserved into fire against the day of judgment, a partition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day.

[15 : 36] The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

You see, it is important for me and you to give heed to the word of God. Now, as we noted last week, before the judgment came, there was the remedy of preaching.

There was the call to amend their ways. There was a call to repentance. We have a nation that has turned its back upon God, and yet the Lord sends a message to the nation through his appointed prophet.

There is this message of salvation and hope. And we now turn to this message of salvation and hope, which is going to be our main focus today.

We can ask ourselves, how can God forgive us our sins? Well, the birth of the Messiah is the most remarkable of all Micah's predictions.

[17 : 02] These words that we have taken as the basis of our text today, but thou Bethlehem, Afrita, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is, to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth hath been from a fold, from everlasting.

Seven hundred years before it took place. We know that this prophecy was so well known that in the New Testament we find that when the wise men came from the east, visited King Herod and inquired of him, where is he that is born King of the Jews?

For we have seen a star in the east and are come to worship him, that Herod being troubled, and the word troubled there means a strong emotional agitation.

He was overcome by a mixture of fear and anger, and he sought for the location of this child's birth, and he gathered the chief priests and scribes of the people together, and he demanded of them where Christ should be born, where this child should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judah, for thus it is written by the prophet, and thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.

[18 : 30] Now, Bethlehem was a remarkable place. It was situated about six miles from Jerusalem.

And the first mention that we have of Bethlehem in the Bible is in Genesis chapter 35, in connection with the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel. For there we read, and Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrata, which is Bethlehem.

The next time that Bethlehem comes up is when a family leaves it during a time of famine to sojourn in Moab, as recorded for us in the Book of Ruth. And one of the key points in the Book of Ruth is the marriage of Boaz, who was a Jew, and who married Ruth, who was from Moab, a Gentile woman.

And through this marriage, Ruth enters the genealogy of Jesus Christ, as she gives birth to Obed, who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David.

And you may recall that recently when we studied 1 Samuel chapter 16, when the prophet Samuel was directed by God to look for a king after his own heart, that God said to him, Fill thine horn with oil, and go, and will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among the sons.

[19 : 54] And in his book that James Boyce wrote, The King Has Come, he makes this comment, Bethlehem was a small town among the many towns of Judah, but with a great history.

And yet the history of Bethlehem was to become even greater, for it was out of Bethlehem that he who was to be a divine and everlasting ruler over Israel would come.

Yes, it was through the seat of David. Micah observed that Bethlehem was so small as to be too little to be among the thousands of Judah.

Thousands, of course, they referred to the basic unit of the Israelite army, which each clan was to raise when its tribe went to war. Bethlehem could not raise such a foe.

We notice that when Joshua allotted towns for the tribe of Judah, Bethlehem was not large enough to be among the 115 cities and towns on the list as recorded for us in Joshua chapter 15.

[21 : 02] So this prophecy that we find here in Micah regarding Jesus Christ reminds us that God's way is contrary to the expectations of men.

Who would have thought that the Messiah, that God's anointed servant, would not come from Jerusalem? That he would come instead from an insignificant town outside Jerusalem called Bethlehem.

Who would have thought that the Messiah would not be born in prominence and in wealth and power? That was certainly man's expectations.

But instead, we find that he was born in obscurity, in poverty, and in weakness. You know, divine intervention is always far above man's expectations.

We spoke recently in considering redemptive history that when mankind was helpless and found in a state of hopelessness, how he was saved through divine intervention.

[22 : 13] And that intervention was by God sending his own beloved son to the curse of death of the cross of Golgotha. You see, this work of salvation is far above people's expectations.

Paul writing to the church at Corinth says, For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. where is the wise? Where is the scribe?

Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God.

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. God's ways are always above our ways and his thoughts are always above our thoughts.

[23 : 25] Paul tells us regarding the early church which God used to turn the world upside down. He says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty and the best things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not will bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

All God's ways are always above our ways and his thoughts are always above our thoughts. You know that Bethlehem means house of bread, Ephrata means fruitfulness, and from this town God gave to the world the bread of life and the birth of his son, Jesus Christ.

The bread of life is a gift from God. We read in the Gospel of John, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In the same Gospel in chapter 6 in his discourse after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus says, Verily, verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life into the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto him, I am the bread of life.

[25 : 23] He that cometh to me shall never hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. From the house of bread came the bread of life.

From the little town of Bethlehem God gave to us the bread of life. And because of his spotless life and death, because of Golgotha's completed transaction, Jesus can lawfully claim that he is the bread of life.

But thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel.

O to truly know life is to know this man that was born in Bethlehem of Judah, Jesus Christ. And today I ask you, is your life empty?

Is your life disappointing? Is your life frustrating? Do you dabble with what the world has to offer and yet you are not satisfied?

[26 : 37] Do you go back to them even when you know the emptiness they produce? O to know life is to know Jesus Christ. so many today are seeking meaning to their lives.

So many today are feeling a void and emptiness in their life and they are trying to fill it like the prodigal son that we find in the gospel with the husks that the world can offer to them.

And what do they find that the husks do not satisfy? Our old confession asks what's the chief end of man? And it answers the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

And you can ask how can I glorify God and enjoy him forever? Well the answer is in Jesus Christ. And this bread this bread is suitable for all.

Jesus said I am the bread of life whosoever eats will live. It can meet the needs that nothing else can meet. It can give strength where nothing else can give strength.

[27 : 48] It can sustain where nothing else can sustain. Paul could say that he could do all things to Christ who strengthens him. And this bread is available for us.

It is within the reach of us all. It is not simply for other people. It is available for all. This bread has come down from heaven. We cannot climb to heaven but heaven came down to where we are.

This bread was born in the little town of Bethlehem. This bread is free for us all. How many are laboring for the fed food that perisheth?

But here he is and he is available for us all. The bread of life. He is here for the taking.

Have he paid all that was necessary? Oh, but thou Bethlehem, Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that he is to be ruler in Israel.

[29 : 01] Now in this great promise, note what Micah says here. Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me. The words unto me.

He comes forth not primarily for the people's sake, but for God's. cross. He shall come forth unto me. We have often spoken of the Godward aspect of the cross, that it is always Godward before it is manward.

The Messiah comes to work out God's redemptive purpose in history. He comes as a servant of the Lord.

God. In Isaiah chapter 42, the first of Isaiah's sermon songs, there we read, Behold my servant to my appalled, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.

I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. All that God would ask to speak to the mission of the Messiah is asserted for us by Jesus himself, as we read in the Gospel of John chapter 4 and verse 34 where he says, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.

[30 : 26] Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me. The Godward aspect of the work of the servant of the Lord, the Messiah, God's anointed servant and our Saviour.

God's name is God's origin. He says, Whose going forth hath been from a fold from everlasting.

This refers to the eternal and divine being of Jesus Christ. Remember how John begins his Gospel. John begins his Gospel by saying, In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

And then he tells us, And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Isaiah, a contemporary of Micah, said in his chapter 9 of his prophecy, For unto us a child is born and to us a son is given.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

[31 : 50] Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth even forever. The seal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

But Micah tells us that between his prophecy and its fulfillment what is to happen.

Therefore will he give them up until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth. Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

You see Micah foretold that the coming years were to involve such hardship for the Jews that could only be compared to a woman in the travails of child birth.

This would happen because God would give them up. He would hand over Judah to suffer and to be purified. For centuries Israel would suffer.

[32 : 51] There would be the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, there would be slaughter and exile. And one may ask will Micah's prophecy ever be fulfilled.

In the captivity of Babylon one could ask where is God's word now? Will Micah's promise ever be fulfilled?

Will his prophecy ever be fulfilled? However, the time of fulfillment would come. In the New Testament we find Paul writing to the Galatians and he says, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth a son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.

Shepherds in the field watching over their flocks, and to them there came the angel of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, so much so that they were so afraid, and the angel said unto them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you spawned this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

heart, but thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose going forth hath been from a fold, from everlasting.

[34 : 31] And the fulfilment of this prophecy of Micah, one is made aware of the sovereignty of God. Consider how God moved the wheels of his providence in order to bring this prophecy to pass.

Joseph would be betrothed to the Virgin Mary. An angel appeared to each of them foretelling that by the power of the Holy Spirit God's Son would be born through Mary's Virgin womb.

And meanwhile, in a faraway room, the Emperor Caesar Augustus had an argument with King Herod and as a result he decreed that Judah would be levied with a tax.

And to emphasize his authority, Augustus took the unusual measure of requiring all the Jewish people to be registered in their hometown. And this occurred during the very month that Mary was expecting to give birth to her son.

So Joseph and Mary made the journey to the place of Joseph's origin which was a descendant of David was Bethlehem. And there by God's decree Jesus was born.

[35 : 51] But thou Bethlehem Ephrata thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose going forth hath been from a fold from everlasting.

The word of God shall be fulfilled. His prophecy will be fulfilled.

The prophecy of Micah given 700 years ago would be fulfilled at God's appointed time. Jesus told the people of his day heaven and earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass away.

And you know that is true for me and you today as it was when Jesus spoke them many many many years ago. It is as true for me and you today that God's word will be fulfilled.

Micah notes therefore will he give them up until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

[37:11] There he predicts the rescuing of his people from their foreign enemies. Yes they would go into exile. Yes it may seem to men that the prophecy of Micah would never be fulfilled but in God's appointed time his people were rescued and it says here in Micah and he shall stand and fit in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of the name of the Lord is God and they shall abide or as the ESV puts it and he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of the name of the Lord is God and they shall dwell secure.

these words brings before us the shepherd ministry of Jesus here was hope one who would come in the strength of the Lord to shepherd his people and to offer his security for now shall he be great into the ends of the earth and this man shall be the peace this was not only for the Jews but here we have the gathering of the Gentiles through the spread of the gospel to all nations he would shepherd not only Israel but all nations giving peace and making his name great throughout the earth in the gospel of Luke we are told that Jesus spoke to two disciples who was making the way to Emmaus after he rose from the dead and he said to them oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ought not

Christ to us have these things and to enter into his glory and beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself I wonder what it was like when he came to this part but thou Bethlehem Ephrata though thou be little among the thousands of Judah yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting let us today believe this message of salvation and hope through Jesus Christ spoken of by the prophet Micah so many years ago and fulfilled in the little town of Bethlehem when Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour of sinners was born into this world for this is the only message of salvation and hope for sinners like me and you this message of hope and salvation is all centered on

Jesus Christ and him crucified it is all centered on the sending of this man this person the Son of God into this world this person that was born in Bethlehem this person who was from everlasting but who took our nature a human nature a created nature unto himself that he could go to the cross of Golgotha that he could bear the sins of his people in his own body and there that he could make a path of life for sinners like me and you this is the only message of salvation and hope for sinners like me and you oh let us believe it let us believe it let us embrace it today let us know this child that was born in

Bethlehem let us know this ruler in Israel let us know the saviour of sinners may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray we give thanks unto thee oh Lord that when we were helpless and hopeless when we were open to the condemnation of the law when we were open to thine own wrath against sin that thou oh Lord made provision for us in the sending forth of thy son that all these promises and prophecies concerning thy son came to fulfilment in the little town of Bethlehem when thy son was born into the world when he came in our nature and in that nature that he bore our sins what our sins deserved in his own body to the cross of

[42 : 33] Golgotha and from the cross that he has made and provided for us a path of life oh may we know him who was born in the house of bread as the bread of life and may we feed upon him knowing that he is the one who can sustain us that he is the one who can meet with all our needs oh Lord we give thanks for him and we pray that today that each and every one of us would have that assurance that we have partaken of the bread of life that he is our portion that he is our life we give thy thanks oh Lord for the gift of thy son for his finished work upon the cross for his continual ministry at thy right hand and for the promise of his return we ask oh Lord that thou would continue with us during this day and may the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more amen