

# Micah 2

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[0:00] Good morning. For those of you I don't know, my name is Dave. I'm one of Shoreline's pastors. And I get to open the book of Micah with you again today.

Today we'll continue in Micah chapter 2. And I have some bad news. For those of you who enjoyed 20 minutes of introductory material last week, I don't have that today.

Just a brief reminder of where we came last week. And then we'll jump into the text of Micah chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible with you, there are some on the back table.

If you don't own a Bible at all, that's now your Bible. The words also will be up on the screen. And I'm sure that many of you have a device that can beam to you the words of the Lord.

Last week, the Lord reminded his people that he cares about sin. He cares about it. And in particular, he cares about their sin.

[1:06] It's really easy for us to point our fingers out there and talk about those people and their sins. It's much more difficult for us to point fingers in here at ourselves.

But that's what the Lord is doing. God cares about all wrongdoing. And especially, though, the wrongdoing done by his own people who are called by his name, who are called to represent him to this world.

And in Micah chapter 1, the Lord said, You have become a transgression. He said that to his own people. You have become a high place, a place of idolatry, of false worship.

And I am coming to cleanse this house. And that cleansing was going to take the form of first Assyria and then Babylon.

Taking first the northern kingdom and then the southern kingdom. Of Israel. And he wanted his people to know ahead of time. This invasion would look to human eyes very much like the ambition of empires.

[2:19] It would seem to be a purely human phenomenon. But he wanted them to know in advance that this would be God's judgment. Kings and nations are but tools in his almighty hands.

He sets their times and their boundaries and their fortunes. And he was about to remove his restraining hand from over Assyria and let that ambition overrun Israel.

In an act of discipline for their sins. But what sins exactly? Chapter 1 looked very much like a courtroom.

A jury is called together. Hear you peoples. All of you. Pay attention. Oh earth and all that is in it. And witness is brought to the stand. Let the Lord God be a witness against you.

The Lord from his holy temple. And a verdict is handed down. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

[3:27] And then a sentence is passed. Verses 6 and 7. Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country. A place for planting vineyards.

And I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations. All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces. All her wages shall be burned with fire.

And all her idols will lay waste. Except there is one thing missing. The jury is called. The witness comes forth. A verdict is rendered. A sentence is passed.

Where is the evidence? We kind of skipped a major step here. What we see is that chapter 1 was actually, so to speak, the prosecution's opening statement.

Now the case is going to be made. Now in chapter 2, the Lord has his prosecuting attorney, so to speak, Micah, his prophet, begin to present the evidence.

[4:27] And so chapter 2 gives us the first of several. First of the sins that Israel is being judged for. Unbridled greed that has led them to do evil.

And so this chapter weaves together a couple ideas. So rather than walk through it verse by verse and bounce back and forth between those ideas, what we're going to do is group together all the verses about one theme.

The biggest chunk of it is going to be specifically what are their sins. Then another chunk about the coming judgment again. And then we'll see that the Lord has weaved in two more themes.

First, he has a lot to say about them, or he has a few words, preparatory words, about them trusting in false prophets and why that might be. And then he concludes with an unexpected turn of events. So first let's pray. And then let's look at each of these themes one after another and see what the Lord would tell his people today. Our great God and Father, there is truly none like you who can wield the empires of this earth like a hammer and a chisel.

[5:46] Father, will you humble us before your mighty hand and help us to find in the shadow of your wings a comfort and a grace. Lord, would you do the work that you set out to do by your Spirit in conforming us to the likeness of your Son, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Micah, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. It's the first word that the Lord speaks about the sins of Israel.

And jumping forward to verse 8 and 9, we also read, 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.

The women of my people you drive out from their delightful houses. From their young children you take away my splendor forever. There are two types of evil that are going on in the land of Israel here.

And it's not what you might suspect. You might suspect, I'm saying, they're stealing from the landowners and they're stealing from the passersby, the travelers, the wanderers, the sojourners.

[7:26] Those are really both species of the very same thing. So verses 2 and 8 and 9 are really, this thievery, this greedy thievery that's going on, are all really the same thing, just in different spots.

But verse 1 is a little bit different. There is an internal evil, and then there is an external evil.

And both matter to the Lord. He cares about the desires of our hearts and the thoughts of our minds as well as the acts of our hands, the deeds that we do.

From the beginning, Scripture is so concerned with both the heart and the hands. Genesis chapter 6, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in all the earth, external, and that the every intention of the thoughts of his heart, internal, was only evil continually.

One of the Ten Commandments, you shall not covet, is entirely about our hearts, about the internal person, about the inner man. And what did our Lord say?

[8:44] The good person, out of the good treasure of his heart, produces good. And the evil person, out of his evil treasure, produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks.

What we do, what we say, how we act, how we live, springs forth from who we are. Which is, indeed, why we sin.

So the Apostle James teaches us what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you. Right? That's the external. What is the cause of the external? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. Sin comes from within. And friends, it's impossible to please God simply by our outward obedience. because he can see right through it. Even if we put up pretenses of honoring the Lord, he can look and see, this pipe, people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[9:58] Friends, the Lord cares about who you are as well as what you do. Both are important in his sight. And that's why at the moment of salvation, he begins the work of sanctification, progressively forming our hearts to will and to reflect his own.

Restoring us to our true purpose, to true humanity. That's why he calls it being born again. But many in Israel were moving in the opposite direction, and I hope that isn't the case for you.

they laid awake, verse 1, thinking up new avenues of evil, not of righteousness. New paths for self, not for service.

And friends, it's that moment. That moment of pondering sin, that moment of seeking it out, thinking on it, dwelling on it, that's the moment for killing sin.

in its embryonic state, so to speak. In James 1, we read, let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

[11:15] For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one, but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

And so friends, when you see yourselves devising wickedness, verse 1, right? When you see yourself being lured by your own wicked desires, James 1, when you see yourself beginning to lust, Matthew 5, when you begin to covet the Ten Commandments, the desire for sin is the place to kill sin.

Don't let it fester. Don't let it grow. Don't let desire conceive and give birth to more sin. Shine light, as Micah is, on your own wicked desires.

Pray for the Lord's help to overcome it. Confess your sinful desires one to another. Fill your mind with good things dwelling on the things of God. Fill your hands with righteous works, not deeds for self.

[12:29] At that moment of temptation. Or, you will continue down the path. Verse 2, and verses 9 and 10.

And sinful desires will blossom into sinful deeds. They covet fields and seize them. and they covet houses and take them away.

And these particular sins of Israel were particularly sinister. Stealing someone's land, evicting them from their homes is serious even today.

But prior to the industrial revolution, so like, more than, more than 99% of all human history, right? Land wasn't just where you had your bed and your stuff.

It wasn't just a place to stay. It was survival. In an agrarian society, land is where you grow your food. Land is where you graze your herds.

[13:39] Land is how you survive. Evicting someone from their land was nearly a death sentence. Without the means to earn, how then can you recover?

Taking a farmer's land is like confiscating, you know, there are a lot of engineers here for the electric boat, right? Confiscating your engineering degree and your P.E.

license, right? How can you then support yourself? Or, like, shredding your security clearance. You can't even enter the building.

Or in the armed forces, it's like stealing the officer's commission. You can't serve without it. Or, nurses and doctors taking away their certifications.

They can't even get into the operating theater. So, verse 2 isn't just an eviction. That is bad. But it robs the family of their very means of survival.

[14:41] And it gets worse. Right? Because sin is never done. If you try to satisfy it this one time, it just grows and grows and grows. You know this from your own life.

It gets worse because not only were they plotting evil, not only were they seizing what was not theirs in the land, not only were they dooming others to near starvation and whole families, right?

Verse 2, they pressed the man and his house, that is, his family, his household. Whose land were they stealing, actually? Look at verse 2. Where did that come from?

It wasn't just a family's land that was being taken away. It was the Lord's. Because the whole land of Israel was the Lord's given to them as an inheritance.

He had allotted it to his people by their tribes as an inheritance of the Lord. But it still remained his own.

[16:04] They were stealing the property of the King of Heaven. And this is why your sins and mine always are ultimately against God.

Intermediately, they are against another person or against ourselves even at some point. Sorry, 1 Corinthians chapter 7. But ultimately, they go back and they are against the great High King. He created everything. He owns everything. He knits together every single human being in his own image in their mother's womb.

And so whether it's against something or against someone, all sin, when you trace it back far enough, is against the great King. And sin spreads.

It knows no boundaries. Our desires don't stand still. Indulging them just feeds the monster and it grows. We all know that by our own experience.

[17:09] And it bore out to be true in Israel as well. Not only content to exploit their kinsmen in the land, their greed led them to victimize the passers-by.

Verse 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.

The Scriptures are full of the Lord's concern for the foreigner, the sojourner, the person who is far from support and family and home. And there's a reason for that. And perhaps the baseline commandment regarding care for the sojourner is Exodus chapter 22 verse 21.

It gives the reason for it. You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him. For you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. But before unbridled greed, travelers were not safe here either among God's people.

In the land of Israel where the outsider should have been especially safe in all the world, no one else had a commandment like this. Commandments like Exodus 22, here, the greedy and the corrupt in the land done nothing of robbing them.

[18:31] Think of how vulnerable you are when you're traveling. Language barriers, cultural barriers, unstable lodging, being seen always as an outsider. The Lord demands good treatment of the sojourner, but greed causes his people to rise up as an enemy.

That's the language of war. And it's turned them into bandits. Far from following the Lord's command to welcome and protect the sojourner, they do the opposite and they rob him.

They've become, as it were, the villains of the parable of the Good Samaritan. And just like every other sin, there are ripple effects.

Have you ever sinned in a way that you thought was small, then it spread, then it spread.

Consequence is just ballooning out of control. You thought it was private, but it affected others.

When verse two, the greedy, they oppress and extort and steal, it's not just that individual that's affected. It's a family. Right? Verse nine, the women of my people, you drive out from their delightful houses, from their young children, you take away my splendor forever.

[19:50] And just like the foreigner, the Lord directs special care towards women and children who are similarly vulnerable. Which is why James says religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

What's the result of all this? What's the that people made in God's image were harmed, defrauded, and left vulnerable?

And God's name was slandered by the evil done in his land by his own people. So how does the Lord name then his own people?

We already read it, verse eight. My people have risen up as an enemy. Not just an enemy, as an enemy against the foreigner, but an enemy against the God who is for the foreigner, who is on his side.

Therefore, God's judgment is coming. The words of this judgment come in three places. Verses three through five, then verse seven, and then verse ten.

[21:09] We'll read them in turn. Therefore, thus says the Lord, behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks.

And you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster. In that day they shall take up a taunt song against you, and moan bitterly, and say, we are utterly ruined.

He changes the portion of my people. How he removes it from me to an apostate. He allots our fields. Therefore, you have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the Lord.

And verse seven, should this be said, O house of Jacob, has the Lord grown impatient? Are these his deeds? Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?

And verse ten, arise and go, for this is no place to rest, because of the uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction.

[22:15] Verse three there teaches us that the coming judgment is unavoidable. They cannot remove their necks from it. There's no hiding from God. When the Lord says, this family, he's talking about the powerful people in the land engaging in the extortion.

They who are stealing land by their power, verses one and two, will have their own land stolen by someone more powerful. He will not permit them to continue in their evil ways, and they will be served poetic justice.

God will not be mocked. He will see justice done in his world. And this isn't just about the one percenters. Those are the people who are able to do these kinds of things.

There's absolutely a difference, we want to say, between those who are preoccupied with finances because things are tight, because they have to be focused on finances, between being preoccupied with tight finances and being preoccupied with greed.

We must distinguish between those. But it is not only the rich who are like this. I'm sure you've met wealthy people who aren't materialistic, and poor people who are.

[23:29] The Lord, verse one, cares very much about our hearts. You and I are not insulated from this or any other temptation.

Let's not think it's out there. It could be right here. Sin knows no class boundaries. And verse four shows us, after three shows us that the coming judgment is unavoidable.

verse four shows how the invading Assyrians are going to mock Israel. In this picture, Assyria is going to jeer Israel by singing a mockery song, putting their own words into Israel's mouths.

About how they're losing everything in the coming conquest, adding insults to injury. Then in verses five and seven and ten, they testify again that judgment is coming.

And God's judgment here is every bit as protective as it is punitive. Yes, evil is punished, but it's also, this is a measure of restraining evil in the world.

[24:49] The one who exploits others can no longer do so. The one who harms others has his strength shattered, so he can do it no longer.

That's what the imprecatory psalms, the psalms that pray to the Lord that his judgment would come upon the wicked, that's what they're doing. They ask the Lord to break the arm of the evildoer so that he may not do evil any longer, and God is doing that to his own people because they have become, he says, verse 8, an enemy.

So that people will no longer suffer under their violence and their wrongdoing. And so up to now we've seen that the Lord cares about sorry, this thing's fidgety today, I don't know, maybe I'm fidgety today.

So far we've seen that the Lord cares about the sins, not just out there, but especially among those who are marked by his name. Both the sins that we do outwardly, but also the things that we desire wrongly inside.

And that our sins against others have so many ripple effects. They cascade outward, and ultimately our sins against the high king of heaven.

[26:26] We've also seen here that the Lord is bringing a just judgment in order not only to punish sin, but to protect the vulnerable by breaking the arm of the evildoer, and that is a good and right thing.

And Micah has some more words of warning for us. They come in verses 6 and verse 11. They are a prelude. They are an introduction. They are a foretaste of something he's going to get into more.

So we're not going to spend a ton of time on them now. Let's look at them. Verse 6, do not preach. I'm looking at the wrong chapter.

That's why that doesn't make sense. Okay, do not preach as they preach. One should not preach of such things. Disgrace will not overtake us. verse 11. If a man should go about in utter wind and lies, saying I will preach to you of wine and strong drink, he would be the preacher for this people.

We're going to see more about these false prophets soon. But here he shows us both sides of the coin of false prophets. Verse 6, no one wants to hear bad news.

[27:41] So they say don't preach. You know, of such things, Micah. Disgrace will not overtake us. If you were one of these powerful people, you would much prefer that guy to Micah, wouldn't you?

In verse 11, right, everyone wants to hear good news, right? And that's what the wine and drink part here, it's not about drunkenness or not. It's about, there's going to be a big harvest, and we're going to make lots of wine, there's going to be plenty, there's going to be peace in the land, that's how we can get the harvest, right?

Micah's going to come back and talk about them more, but what at least we should say and note today is beware people telling you what you want to hear, or who won't tell you the hard things, because danger lurks there.

inflated egos resign there. Unchallenged pride lurks there.

Unconfronted sin dwells there. And I'm sure you've come to expect people telling you what you want to hear from, you know, advertising, salesmen.

[29:04] They'll tell you what you want to hear to get you to make the purchase, right? We all know that. But these aren't ad men. These are prophets, religious teachers, condoning sin that they should have confronted, and easing consciences that they should have convicted.

Beware people telling you what you want to hear. If the gardener has no shears, soon there will be no garden. And that is Micah's job in their lives.

And as he draws this chapter to a close, something most unexpected happens. I thought about how can we transition to that, but there's like no transition.

It's like sharp and hard. Look at verse 12. Verse 12. immediately after denouncing false prophets, with no words of transition, suddenly, I will surely assemble all of you.

Oh, 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.

[30:31] And then Micah speaks. 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 Lord moves so swiftly from saying, surely this judgment will befall you, to certainly, surely I will assemble all of you and redeem you. Just as surely as the judgment would come, so too would the rescue. And who will do it? I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob.

I will gather the remnant of Israel. I will set them together. Just as the coming exile comes from God. Assyria, Babylon, just tools in his hand.

As surely as the coming exile comes from God, the salvation would come from him too. Israel must not then forget, mistake their eventual liberation, and think of it chiefly in terms of geopolitics, right?

[31:51] As many in our day are tempted to do. And what's interesting is the last verse, these last verses, he pictures himself as a shepherd gathering together a scattered flock, which reminds us, actually this is a metaphor used frequently of the Lord.

Most famously, Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And all the prophets are picking this up. Micah picks it up here.

Jeremiah, hear the word of the Lord, O nations, declared in the coastlands far away, say, he who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.

Isaiah also pictures the Lord as a shepherd. He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms.

He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young. And this shepherd does something amazing. Micah concludes verse 13 talking about how the Lord would save them.

[33:04] This shepherd is also a great military leader, going up before them, shattering the gates of the enemy. One of my favorite British preachers put it this way.

He's encouraging us to think about verse 13 in spatial terms. Where does everybody have to be standing for verse 13 to work? He put it this way.

One who breaks open the wall will go up before them. Now how can he break open the way and go up before them? Where has he got to be to do that?

Where has the shepherd king got to be to break open the way and go up before them? He's got to be down where they are. He's got to be in the exile so to speak.

Where they are. He's got to be where they are and do what they cannot do. That is break out of the captivity and go up the hill of the Lord. God is to be there.

[34:11] Why does that matter? It's because he didn't stand far off and say, okay, you can come home now. He broke them out from the inside.

He was there with them. He was sending Israel into exile and going there with them to be with them even in the discipline. He was there with them.

in the consequences of their sin. And there he broke down the gates and led them out to freedom with him.

And so Israel would have been comforted. Not only would the Lord eventually rescue those of his own from this coming judgment, he would be going with them all the way.

They would never be abandoned. And they would have been comforted because they would have heard in verse 13 echoes of the exodus. A people in captivity, a God who came to them, who broke down the captors' walls and led them out, going before them as a pillar of cloud and of fire.

[35:27] And that's the Lord's pattern, isn't it? That's the way he led his people out of slavery in Egypt. that's the way he's promising now to do, as they are being attacked by Assyria and then by Babylon.

And this is the promised rescue. And with this pattern established, the Lord references himself as a shepherd, that he comes to rescue his own people from the consequences of their own sin.

And he does it by coming to the place they are. And he doesn't break down the gates from without. He does it from within. He enters into the consequences of their own sin.

Can you see where this is going? It is a picture of the final salvation that he would accomplish.

Because a king in the line of David would come to Israel saying, I am the good shepherd.

And he would come to rescue them from the consequences of their own sins. This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. And he would do so by entering the very consequences of their sins with them.

[36:53] The wages of sin is death. The Apostles Creed states, I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

The wages of sin is death. He entered into the captivity of death, the consequences of our sin, and from there, breached the walls.

The ironclad gates of death lie shattered by the Lord, who on the third day rose again. And he is gathering a people as his flock from every tongue and tribe and nation, and he is drawing them to himself, and they share in his victory.

The spirit, Romans chapter 8, the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you.

[38:18] Friends, let us worship the shepherd king who breaks down the walls for his people. Let's pray.

Oh, Lord, there is none like you. Lord, we see how greatly you care about sin.

so much so that you are willing to enter into the consequences of it with your people. And thank you, Lord, that you are strong to save.

Lord, we will spend all our days worshiping the shepherd king and conqueror in whose name we pray.

amen. Amen.