

Micah 5

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[0:00] Good morning. For those of you I don't know, my name's Dave, and I'm one of Shoreline's pastors, and I get, and a quick note to parents, squeaks and wiggles are more than welcome.

It's really hard to knock me off my game, so don't worry about that. There are no problems. Hey, man, your kids are better behaved than you are.

All right. So it would be you doing it. Anyway, all right. Today we continue our series in the book of Micah into chapter 5. And one verse in this passage is very familiar.

Verse 2. It's quite famous, in fact. You probably hear it every year leading up to Christmas. You hear it cited not from Micah, but you hear it cited in the book of Matthew, typically, during the Advent season.

Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him.

[1:32] Wise men came from the east. They went to Herod, who was Rome's puppet, governing over most of Judea at the time. Herod hadn't heard anything about a royal birth.

And he was not very excited to hear about the birth of a potential rival. And so Matthew continues, Herod assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea. For so it is written by the prophet, the prophet Micah, in chapter 5. And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. And so each year, if you're in church, you probably hear Micah chapter 5, verse 2, quoted all by itself, apart from the rest of its context.

But today we hear it as part of Micah's original prophecy, the whole thing. And we'll see, it's a little perplexing, at least to me.

[2:46] I'm going to read all of Micah chapter 5, so we hear it in its context. 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.

Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth. And the rest of these brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure.

For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our places, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men.

[4:07] They shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances. And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.

Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like a dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man, nor wait for the children of man.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes

through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. And in that day, declares the Lord, I will cut off your horses from among you, and will destroy your chariots.

And I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. And I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes.

[5:18] And I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you. And you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands. And I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities.

And in anger and wrath, I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey. Amen. This is God's Word.

And it is a challenging Word. It has humbled me. There are things in Micah chapter 5 I do not understand.

And that is a good reminder for us. Like, I still, I had an extra week because Kent preached last week. I had extra time, and I asked for extra prayer, more prayer than I normally ask for from people in my sermon.

I still do not fully understand this passage. It is a reminder for us to come to God's Word with a spirit of humility.

[6:28] And if we come to it with the attitude that we already have the answers, we won't find anything new. We'll simply overlook the things that we weren't looking for. We certainly won't be changed by His Word.

So friends, let's humble ourselves. And submit ourselves to our God and to His Word for His glory and for our good. Let's pray. Father, this is a challenging word.

Lord, will you help me to be clear, as clear as I am able by the power of Your Spirit, more clear than I am able by the power of Your Spirit. Will You help us to be humble before Your mighty hand.

And will You do good in our midst by this proclamation? For Your glory and for our good. We ask this in Christ's name.

Amen. Like I said, I do not, I do not understand all the details of this text. Especially in those central verses, like verses 6 through 9.

[7:41] But, and this is a good lesson to remember just at the outset. We do not need to understand every detail of the Bible in order to understand the big picture.

in order to find our hope in it. In order to be corrected by it. And to grow in our worship of the living God. So, when you're reading your Bible, if you can't make sense of something, don't be discouraged.

Focus on what you can understand. Get help on the parts that you don't. And entrust yourself and your understanding to the Lord whose word it is.

So today I hope that we will see in this the big picture that the Lord hopes to communicate, not hopes, that the Lord is communicating to His people through His prophet Micah.

Micah's going to do quite a bit of back and forth. In chapter 5, it's okay if you get a little seasick by that. The back and forth isn't so much about where things are happening or something, but when.

[8:49] When is all this happening? And actually, that will be the key. The when of this is the center of the message. Because it's not what we would have expected if we were standing there with Micah.

If you look back, right, let's kind of, we need to orient ourselves in time again if we're going to understand this. So just a brief refresher. If you look back to chapter 1, verse 1, you read that he prophesied during the reigns of King Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Because of that, we know the approximate dates of his time of prophesying. It couldn't have started any earlier than 740 or 750 before Christ, and it wouldn't have extended past about 690.

In Micah's day, Israel had already been divided into two kingdoms. Ten tribes to the north called Israel, two tribes to the south, still following a Davidic king, worshiping in Jerusalem called Judah. Micah, along with his contemporary Isaiah, were warning both Israel in the north and Judah in the south that their unfaithfulness to God's covenant would bring about the covenant curses.

[10:10] Specifically, just like with the Canaanites before them, God would not allow his people to pollute his land with idolatry and with wickedness and injustice.

So they would go into exile. And so Israel and Judah would be taken from the land in two successive invasions. Israel would fall in the north to Assyria in 722, which is actually during Micah's ministry.

We don't know if the book of Micah happened before that, during that, after that. His ministry spans it. Perhaps part of it was before and part of it was after.

We're not quite certain. Assyria would then actually lay siege to Jerusalem, trying to take the southern kingdom of Judah as well. The Lord protected them in spectacular fashion.

You can read that in 2 Kings chapter 19, and Assyria fled. But Judah wouldn't stand forever.

Starting roughly a hundred years after that, in 608, a new empire, Babylon, would take Judah into captivity in several waves culminating in 586 B.C.

[11:27] And so, I want us to put ourselves in the place of someone hearing Micah's words for the first time during his ministry, when he first gave this prophecy.

Imagine that you are standing in the streets of Jerusalem near the temple precincts, and outside the temple, a prophet is delivering a message, this message, from the Lord, all while Assyria is bearing down on you and threatening your very life.

And because of my own limitations, it's actually easier for me, I'm sorry, to work backwards through this passage. If that confuses you, I'm going to pray that the Lord would grant you help because this is all I got.

I'm sorry. So, we're going to start in verse 15 and work our way back because that's the only way I can wrap my head around this well. So, Assyria is bearing down on you, threatening your life and your family and your very civilization.

The final word of Micah chapter 5 is, and in anger and wrath, I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

[12:49] You would understand that very clearly to be Assyria. Now, we don't tend often to like hearing about God's judgment.

It rubs us the wrong way. What do you think the people of Ukraine right now want to see? Justice. Justice. If you were standing in the temple in Jerusalem, right, in the temple precincts, listening to the prophet tell you that your city will fall, that's been the message, that eventually the city will fall, that your grandchildren will be exiles.

A message like this would be a comfort. God is actually good. This would be a comfort that God is assuring His people even before they go into exile that the evildoers will be brought to justice.

The Lord of all the earth sees wickedness. And though wrongdoers may be able to cover up their wicked deeds in darkness, and though the courts may fail, and though the wicked might find loopholes justice, though human justice remains incomplete, right, did Hitler see justice?

Could he have seen justice in this world? Though justice fails in human hands, the Lord of all the earth will do right.

[14:30] Right. That is a comfort and a terror. Because, well, if we're honest, verse 15 clearly shows us there is an inside and there is an outside.

Right. Those nations, He will judge them. Right. And if we're honest, we all know that we we have not been fully righteous.

And the God of all the earth who sees all and is perfectly just will see justice done in my case and in yours.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There's an inside and an outside and the justice is coming. Which side are you on?

All of us need to get in to the inside. Stay tuned for how that happens. Because we're going to back up to the middle section. We're actually going to add verse 1 to that middle section.

[15:52] 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. Moving ahead to the middle section starting in the second half of verse 5.

When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our places then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men. They shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword and the land of Nimrod at its entrances.

And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord like showers on the grass which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man.

And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations in the midst of many peoples like a lion among the beasts of the forest like a young lion among the flocks of the sheep which when it goes through treads down and tears in pieces and there is none to deliver.

Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries and all your enemies shall be cut off and in that day declares the Lord I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds and I will cut off sorceries from your hand and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities.

[17:46] Three big categories here. One. Israel will be dispersed. The covenant curses are coming to pass. They will be distributed like dew across the land in the midst of many peoples like showers on the grass and the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations in the midst of many peoples.

That part is clear. That part Micah has been saying again and again leading up as have been the other prophets like Isaiah. The part that I most do not understand about this passage is also right here.

It's those images of Judah as like a lion or shepherding the gates of the enemies even in the midst of their exile. Perhaps it is that they will endure and that their enemies won't because there still is a Jewish people.

There's no longer a Babylonian or an Assyrian people. Perhaps it's that. Perhaps it's a reference to people like Daniel who actually did lead in the gates. Nimrod is a reference to Babylon the second kingdom.

Perhaps it's that. Perhaps it's a moral superiority. I'm not quite certain. Whatever it is all of those things are in fact true. The Lord did bring all of those to pass.

[19:20] But more important than that is he says in verses 10 and following his purpose in doing all of these things. What is his purpose in bringing about this dispersion, this exile for his people?

It is not to abandon them. It is not to wash his hands of them or to burn them up. It is not to show his hatred.

It's to cut away their idolatry and their injustice, their wickedness. When he says it's a couple categories of things.

He says first that he'll cut off their horses and their chariots and their cities and their strongholds. He's saying I'll cut away the things that you're leaning on that you think will protect you but really can't.

Israel had been building up not only their own strength but making military alliances with pagan nations like the Lord had told them not to. He said I'm going to take all of that away.

[20:30] all of the false security from your life I am going to take it away so that you can see that there is one place to place all your hopes.

There is one place to rest. There is one rock to stand on. Friends, our safety our security and our stability is not in our own strength which will fail.

one day. Or in our wealth however much we have or however much we hope to gain or any other thing that we would bank on all of them can and will fail.

We need solid rock and it is God's grace when he shows us that. It's God's mercy when he shows us that we need him.

So friends, don't bank on any of those things. Run to Christ before he has to tear them away from you. Not only that, he says that he will cut off their sinful ways, their sorceries, and their idol worship.

[21:55] We've been at that week by week and so I won't belabor the point. I think one specific thing that is interesting here is how he points out in verse 13.

You shall bow down no more to the work of your hands. Right? Someone had to carve the idols. We look back on them and scoff how foolish is it to worship something that you have made.

But are we that different? Sure, we don't carve necessarily the objects of our devotion, but are we that much different? I'll leave you to stew on that one with the Lord.

Like I said, I don't understand every part of this center of the passage, but what I do understand is this. This section exists to tell us God's purpose is to cleanse his people of their sins.

He is conforming us to his own word. He will do what he's promised. There are no idle threats with God.

[23:14] There are no empty promises. He's going to bring about this dispersion because he's promised it. And he's telling that the purpose of it is to refine them and make them holy.

Friends, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Christ at the moment of your salvation, God forgave you of all your sins.

And now in every other moment, he is teaching you to walk in righteousness. You were made for the beauty, for the glory of righteousness.

And his work in your life is to conform you more and more to the image of his son who will be praised forevermore. His righteousness is something to be celebrated and sought after and beheld and extolled for all generations.

And so walking in his ways should be a delight to us. And when it is not, he gets to work.

[24:32] He gets to work in our lives. The last section as we move backwards through this text is the famous one.

The one we cite at Christmas time. And it would have been most perplexing to the people who first heard it.

Let's read verse two. A siege is coming, right? Verse one. 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.

Therefore he shall give them up, until the time when she who is in labor has given birth, and the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, and he shall be their peace.

If Assyria and Babylon are knocking on your door, what do you pray for?

[26:13] What are the people in Ukraine praying for right now? And in the Tigray region of Ethiopia right now? And in other places where there is conflict like Myanmar right now, what are they praying for?

Deliverance from that great enemy, right? And what's the biggest thing on your plate right now? What are you praying for?

It might be life and death like it was for Judah, watching an approaching army bear down on them. It might be, which makes God's answer, because this is, right, this is the answer, which makes his answer so surprising.

His answer to Babylon, to Assyria, is a leader that doesn't come during the invasions of Babylon and Assyria.

They don't know it yet, but it won't be for 700 more years. Because no leader from Bethlehem, that's the very specific promise, no leader from Bethlehem rose up to drive away the Assyrians.

[27:56] No ruler in David's line, the city of David is Bethlehem, right? No ruler from David's line liberated them from Babylon. Or Alexander's Greek army, which came after that.

Or Rome, which would come still later. Do you see the disconnect? The promise of this passage does not have anything to do with the army that is coming and crashing down on them.

Assyria is here today. Babylon is coming in a generation or two. This shepherd is coming, 700 years from now.

Everyone receiving this news of distress that their grandchildren, right, their grandchildren will be long dead before this shepherd arrives. How is that the answer? How could that be the answer? What hope is that? It's like you're being mugged. You call out for help and someone shouts down the alley to you, you know, don't worry, something great will happen decades from now.

[29:23] The mugger will be like, dude, that doesn't make any sense. I want us to really feel the disconnect. How jarring is that?

as we continue to contemplate that incongruity, let's at least consider what this promised ruler is like.

He's from Bethlehem, right, and immediately the Jewish people would have understood he's from the line of David. Bethlehem is famous for two things at this point. Ruth and Naomi and King David. And Ruth was David's great-grandmother. So it's about the royal line. So it's a Davidic figure. From Bethlehem shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.

So he's following in the footsteps of his forerunner, David. He will be king in Israel. And just like David, who was a shepherd, shepherd, verse 4, he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord and the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

[30:42] But quite unlike David, we read here that his days, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

how can someone coming in the future have their origin in ancient days? That doesn't quite make sense.

At the very least, it means that he's from an ancient bloodline, David, Abraham. But as we read more and more of the Scriptures, we find someone who comes born in Bethlehem of the line of David who says things like before Abraham was.

I am. Seems very much to understand this coming forth from of old, from ancient days to apply in a very different way than a simple bloodline.

And also unlike David, we read that with this shepherd king, they shall dwell secure. For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

[31:59] David's kingdom was very small in the scope of world empires. But this king will have dominion from east to west, from north to south, to the very ends of the earth.

It will be a universal kingdom. And he shall be their peace. We'll come back to that in a moment. This message feels disconnected from their troubles. It's about a coming king in David's line. He's like David but also much greater. But it has nothing to do immediately with their biggest problem. And it's a really, really big problem. It's literally an army. In fact, it's literally two armies. So does this seem tone deaf?

To say Assyria and Babylon are about to crush you. But don't worry. Hundreds of years later there will be a great king.

[33:12] Here's what that means. That disconnect. Here's what that means for us. No matter what your trouble is, and you may be in grave trouble, the Lord of hosts who knows all things, who has declared the end from the beginning, says to you, the final answer to your trouble is this shepherd king.

Even if the wave breaks over your head today, and you are undone. God is putting our troubles in perspective.

Even in the midst of absolute calamity. What does this invasion mean for them? Their economy is crippled.

Their home is destroyed. Their society is vanished. Their family is taken into captivity. Their future is exile, and they might very well die in the battle.

Even then, this is the good news you need. Even then, this is the good news that you really need.

[34:39] And it's not that God doesn't care or is dismissive of your current plight. Scripture has lots to say about what to do in the midst of trouble.

How we ought to pray in all things. It gives us wisdom for what to do in the midst of all sorts of trying circumstances. It teaches us to lament, to draw near to God, and pour out our soul to Him in the midst of the calamity.

It gives us the consolation of the family that He has given us among the people of God. So, Scripture has lots to say about what to do in the midst of trouble.

And in fact, this shepherd king himself would be called the man of sorrows. He would know a thing or two about personal hardship and what calamity looks like in our own lives.

and even staring calamity in the face, God says the good news that you need, that you really need, isn't that this situation gets fixed.

[35:53] The good news that you need is Christ is coming and He will be your peace because He will make peace between you and God. And He will undo death itself so that no calamity can touch you really, only for an instant, only for a moment.

And then He makes all things new. The good news that you need, that you really need, is beyond all circumstances in this life.

The news you need is that Christ is coming because what no eye has seen, nor ear, heard, nor the heart of man imagined, imagined what God has prepared for those who love them.

Literally, it is beyond our imagining. The rule of this shepherd king, the restoration that He brings is beyond our comprehension. And so when we ask for the Lord to mend this circumstance, He says, I have something better than you can possibly imagine.

the fixing of this circumstance is far too small a goal for you. I have something better. more. The reason that this is the answer to our present calamity is not that our troubles are really kind of small because really they're not.

[37:35] the reason that this is the answer to all our present struggles is because the gospel is so big.

It's the answer. Again, this isn't the only thing that the Bible has to say about our struggles.

But it is the best thing. It's the best thing. Verse 5, He shall be their peace. Certainly that's because His rule will end all wars and strife and sin in this world when He comes to rule and to reign forever. but also because He has made peace between a holy God and an unrighteous people. He came and He died on the cross in the stead of ruined sinners so that we might be forgiven in Him, we who are clinging to Him.

He has taken our sins with Him to that cross and there they are nailed. And He has plunged death into the grave itself and broken it forever. And all who call upon the name of the Lord, He will be their peace and they may be saved with Him forever, long after.

[38:56] Babylon and Assyria and all other names are forgotten. Christ will endure and all who are with Him, all who are found in Him, He will give His own peace to them and be the good shepherd they have always needed.

And so if you haven't called on the name of the Lord for this salvation that He has promised, will you do so now? Now? If you received the news that you would soon lose your home, think about what that really means for you.

If you received the news that you would soon lose your home, that your job, your whole economy would be smashed to bits, that your place of worship would be desecrated and razed to the ground, that your whole society would be dismantled before your very eyes, that your family would be taken against your will, into servitude in a foreign land, what would you pray for?

What message would you hope to receive? What message of comfort would you hope to receive?

The news you need, the guardrails you need, the support you need, the consolation that you need, the hope that you need, isn't finally that that situation will be corrected.

the news you need is the shepherd king, who has come, who has laid down his life for the flock, who has risen again, and is coming for you again.

[40:59] The final answer to all your fears and suffering is, there is a king coming to make all things new.

So, let's pray to him. our great God, there is truly none like you.

Lord, will you help us to lay hold of that promise that beyond what our eyes can see as far as solutions to our troubles, or even that our hearts can imagine, Lord, that there is coming from you news that is even better for those who love you.

I ask, Father, that those who have not come to find life in your name would right this moment, turning from their sins and casting themselves in faith on you. And for those of us who have, Lord, that you would do the work that you have shown us in this passage, that you would conform us to Christ and tear away our idols and our wickedness, and that you would cause us to hope beyond the things that we are hoping for, but to hope on him and on his coming.

We ask this in his name. Amen.