

Micah 4:1-5:5 "Hope for the Hopeless"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 August 2019

Preacher: Will Spink

- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- The year is 701 B.C. The armies of mighty Assyria under the direction of their king Sennacherib are laying waste to one city after another in the Middle East.
- And 20 years earlier, they've wiped out the northern kingdom of Israel, taken survivors into captivity. And more recently, they've marched through one town after another in Judah, all the way up now to the gates of Jerusalem.
- They've been ruthlessly pillaging, destroying, just like the prophets said would happen as God's judgment came on his prosperous and promiscuous people.
- Nothing has slowed them down. And here they are outside Jerusalem laying siege to the capital city of God's people. King Hezekiah in Jerusalem has sought alliance with Egypt.
- [1 : 1 6] He's sought to buy off Assyria and pay them to go away. Now he and the prophet Micah ministering there in Jerusalem and all the soldiers standing on the wall afraid hear the taunts from Sennacherib as we read them in 2 Kings 18.
- Do not let Hezekiah deceive you for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh by saying, Yahweh will surely deliver us and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
- Do not listen to Hezekiah for thus says the king of Assyria, make your peace with me, come out to me. Each one of you will eat of his own vine and each one of his own fig tree and each one of you drink the water of his own cistern.
- And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, Yahweh will deliver us. Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand.
- Pretty hopeless situation it seems, right? We've been way outmatched. We've run out of allies. We've exhausted all our resources.
- [2 : 4 1] Micah told us this would happen if we kept running after our idols and trusting in human strength. Boy, looking out there at that Assyrian army makes us feel small and helpless.
- It seems we've reached the end of the road. The end, in fact, of God's protection. Have you felt like that before?
- I felt that a little bit this week. Just to be honest with you, a heavy weight. Mostly from last week's passage.
- Feeling the conviction of my sin and my weakness. Failures in leading God's people as I should.
- How can you be a senior pastor? You don't have what it takes. You deserve God's just judgment for not even living passionately for him.
- [3 : 4 0] You can hardly call yourself a Christian. Maybe you've been struggling to pray recently. And you've thought, what a pathetic Christian I am.

I'm the weakest Christian in the world. I can't even find words to talk to God. Maybe you're feeling outnumbered on campus or at work.

And you hear us say that God tells us to live for him all the time, everywhere. And you think, that's a losing battle where I am. What a joke.

How could I even begin to do that? Maybe you hear me talk about revival. Praying for God to do great things in us and in our community.

And what you really think is, seriously? I don't talk like that. That's way too big for little people like us. Pastor, I'm just open for one good conversation about God with my family.

[4 : 50] Like, just one night would be great. One encouraging interaction with an unbeliever, revival. Whether it's the reality of our sin, the strength of our enemies, the struggle in the battle of faith, there are many real reasons to feel hopeless, aren't there?

If you need more help coming up with one, I can give you more later. Reasons we feel small and weak. And as a result, sometimes give up spiritually.

And focus on somewhere else I can feel more successful. Feel better about myself, right? And Micah comes to us this morning and says, You know what?

Those things are true. But they're not all that's true. I've got a message of hope. When you feel most hopeless, I've just finished saying that Mount Zion will be flattened, Jerusalem will be a heap of ruins.

That's the last verse of chapter 3. But that's not all that's true. He says, lift up your head. Listen to a hope that will sound too good to be true.

[6 : 16] It's Micah chapter 4. I'll read the first five verses for now, and then we'll pray and talk about the whole passage. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills, and people shall flow to it.

And many nations shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations afar off. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks.

Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But they shall sit, every man, under his vine and under his fig tree. And no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its God, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God, forever and ever. Let's pray.

[7 : 38] Father, thank you for a message of hope. We need it. Holy Spirit, help our hearts be not only desperate, but able to hear it this morning.

In Jesus' name, amen. This morning, I just want to walk through Micah's promise of hope together, and then we'll talk about how God's people should respond to such a message.

What's he saying, and what should we do in light of that? So first, as this chapter begins, this prophet who has been full of doom and gloom, right?

That's about all we've gotten so far, as he addresses idolatrous people like us. He's laid us low, right? If we're honest, if we've been listening, and now he wants to lift us up, lift up our heads with an inspiring hope.

It shall come to pass in the latter days. Before we go any further, that's now, you know, right? The latter days.

- [8 : 51] As you turn into the New Testament, we see that the last days or the latter days actually begin with the death and resurrection of Jesus and continue on until he comes again.
- So what we're talking about is what we're living in right now. Peter pronounces that reality at Pentecost. Paul reiterates it many places, like 1 Corinthians 10, where he says all these Old Testament stories are written down as examples for us now.
- Those upon whom the end of the ages has come. That's now. The inspiring hope Micah's talking about is for future completion, for sure.
- But in many ways, it's already begun today. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted up above the hills.
- Remarkable, right? Micah, you just said it was going to be devastated. And now it's growing taller? Mount Zion, Jerusalem, that's representative for God's people as a whole.
- [10 : 07] They're not just alive and present, but prominent and impactful. And although it does sometimes seem to be happening, the gates of hell will not prevail against the church, right?
- In fact, it's not merely for ethnic Israel to be flourishing, but nations turning to God. The glorious vision here of a global worship service.
- Every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say, come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.
- And we've seen that happen, haven't we, over the last 2,000 years. As Christianity begins with this small band of followers in one small town in the Middle East, and all of the sudden it begins to explode and spread all over the globe.
- And maybe you don't feel that as much because we've got this Western mindset, right? It can be very limited. But the Pew Research Center tells us not only has the number of those professing faith in Christ quadrupled in the last 100 years, you know where a quarter of those people live?
- [11 : 32] One quarter of them in sub-Saharan Africa. You may not be seeing all of it. Millions of them living as a minority in China. Millions more in India.
- Nations are flowing to Mount Zion, right? And that's not merely a geographical statement. It's not getting on a plane to get there. It's primarily a spiritual statement.
- Right? How do they get there? End of verse 2. Out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
- The good news about Yahweh and who he is is spread by his people. They, the nations, come in as we go out with the word of God.
- What an awesome global movement of God showing himself to be the one true king overall. What an exciting thing to be a part of a movement like that.
- [12 : 35] And then what does Yahweh's kingdom look like? Verse 3. He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide for strong nations afar off.
- Perfect justice, right? This king who knows how it should be, he makes it right. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
- Nations shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn more anymore. Y'all, world peace! And we're not even at a beauty pageant. Like, it's coming! It's not all the way here yet, right?
- But world peace globally. How? Yahweh is the one ruling. That's how we know it's coming.

Yahweh will bring it. Rest of verse 4. They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree and no one shall make them afraid.

[13 : 33] You remember Sennacherib promised that to God's people, the words I read earlier? This abundant security, this great provision. And Micah says, you know where it's actually gonna come from?

Yahweh. He is the one who will. The great king of hosts, the king of heaven promises, the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

For all the peoples walk each in the name of its God. But we will walk in the name of Yahweh, our God, forever and ever.

A colorful gathering of the people enjoying the fruits of this kind king with no one to make us afraid because our God is greater and stronger and brings peace and justice and eternal security.

That's not at all what we feel at our lower points, is it? And yet Micah says it's coming.

[14 : 39] In fact, in many ways, it's already started. And don't you want to be a part of something like that? Fearful, small soldier on the wall thinking the end has come.

And he says, no, there's hope. We want to be a part of that, right? Well, not me, right? I mean, the high priest, maybe, yeah.

Billy Graham, sure. Mother Teresa, maybe. But little, weak, struggling, insignificant, me?

No way. You've got to listen to what Micah says next. This is so great. It's not just hope out there somewhere for somebody who's really good.

This hope is for an astounding people. Verse 6. In that day, declares the Lord, I will assemble the strong and reward those who have been successful.

[15 : 40] Nope, nope, sorry. That's not it. That's not what he says, is it? Let me try one more time. In that day, declares the Lord, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted and the lame I will make the remnant.

And those who are cast off, a strong nation, and the Lord will reign over them. Really? The lame? Isn't this glorious?

I mean, we hardly know what to do with a statement like that because in every area of our life, we get what we earn, don't we? We reward strength and competence.

We honor achievement. And God's heart is for the outcast and the undeserving. Just because he's building a strong nation doesn't mean he's looking for all the strong people.

That's how I do it. But no, incredibly, he's so strong that he will choose the weak and the foolish and the insignificant and make them a strong nation.

[16 : 54] Kids, that's not how you pick a team on the playground, is it? You're gonna lose. Nobody wants to lose. You pick the strong people, the big guys. But it is how God builds his church.

To the astonishment of all the nations who value and depend on human strength, he gathers the lame and the castoffs. And then, y'all, those are actually the ones who go out with the message of Yahweh's greatness and goodness that brings world peace.

That's how it comes. It brings the nations flowing to this gracious, condescending God of the Bible who has welcomed them in. It actually gets even crazier and even better than this.

Not just the lame being the remnant, but those that God himself cast off, brought back.

The exiles away from his land. They were hopeless, right? They're actually made secure. Listen at verse 9. He's going to make a significant time shift.

[18 : 06] You may not notice it as well in English, but I'll point it out to you. He says, no longer in those future latter days, but now. 700 B.C.

What are God's people facing now? Verse 9. Now, why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished that pain seized you like a woman in labor?

Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor. For now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country. You shall go to Babylon.

There you shall be rescued. There the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. He's speaking to them of real suffering, isn't he? Because real suffering is coming.

They really will be taken into exile. There's reason for great grief over that. But even there, he's at work to redeem them, isn't he?

[19 : 07] Right in the midst of Babylon, when they've lost all hope and they can't see anything good, there he works to redeem. Verse 11. Now, many nations are assembled against you saying, let her be defiled and let our eyes gaze upon Zion, Assyria, and others looking around, taunting and saying, aha, we have the upper hand.

They're stronger. But, they do not know the thoughts of the Lord. They do not understand his plan that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.

Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, your hoofs bronze. You shall beat in pieces many peoples and shall devote their gain to the Lord, their wealth, to the Lord of the whole earth.

The promise of God's discipline right alongside the promise of his restoration. Nothing can happen to you so bad that he can't redeem it.

There is no pit so deep that he is not deeper still, Corrie ten Boom. If you will trust this great king, even those of you who feel so far, so distant from him that he sent you away, if you will yet return and trust him, you will find an eternal security against all the evidence of your circumstances.

[20 : 42] Despite everything you look around and see, despite what your heart tells you to feel, you'll find an eternal security that will never, ever let you down.

See, that's really the reason that this astounding people people who really don't have much reason for hope can have this inspiring hope, isn't it?

It's all through this amazing king. Already, as we've been reading, we've seen, I hope you've noticed, every time, this is what Yahweh will do.

He keeps saying, I'll do this, I'll do this, he will assemble, he will gather, he'll make the remnant, he'll reign over them forever. And chapter 5 opens with one more, now, but.

Verse 1, 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. It's not looking good, is it?

[21 : 43] I know what you're facing, I know how you're feeling, 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 origin is from of old, from ancient days. There's a verse you recognize, isn't it, kids?

You hear that one at Christmas time, don't you? You know what that's about, right? The Messiah, the promised one, the king, he's gonna be born in the little town of Bethlehem. See, it's not just the people who find power in weakness, but that's actually the model of power for the true king.

His great strength will come from apparent weakness. How do you know that weak, failing, insignificant you can really be a part of this kingdom?

The king comes from too small Bethlehem. But his rule will be magnificent.

[22 : 52] Verse 3. Therefore he shall give them up until the time she who is in labor has given birth. Then 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. In the power of the one true God, Yahweh, the one true king, the promised one, will shepherd his flock of lame outcasts who have become beloved children.

And the fact that he is great is what brings world peace. The fact that he is great to the ends of the earth is what makes them secure. The fact that this unparalleled king reigns with justice and grace makes this inspiring hope that Micah promises even possible.

It's his reign. Their hope is not in their own strength, their own greatness. They are weak, but he is strong.

To be clear, no matter what current powerful leaders may say, there is one great king for Israel and for all nations.

[24 : 25] There is one chosen one in whom they and we all find hope. He doesn't live in the White House and he doesn't find strength in human power.

To suggest otherwise is dangerously distracting from the true king. See, we are to look for our hope to no one else and nowhere else but the king born in Bethlehem whose greatness no one can fathom, no one can equal.

He is our hope. Amen? It's what God's people learned then. It was looking pretty bleak for God's people in Micah's day.

Stuck before Sennacherib's powerful army. Human weakness has led them to face judgment. Human power has failed to deliver them.

Most of them are utterly hopeless. And finally, King Hezekiah surrenders. But not to the might of Assyria.

[25 : 38] Instead, he surrenders to the unparalleled power of Yahweh. He looks to God, repents, and cries for God's help.

He prays this way, O Lord, the God of Israel who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear. Open Your eyes, O Lord, and see. And hear the words of Sennacherib which he has sent to mock the living God. Now, O Lord, our God, save us, please, from His hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, Yahweh, are God alone.

And the angel of the Lord that night with no help from the army of Judah strikes down 185,000 mocking Assyrians.

and mighty Sennacherib flees and soon dies himself. God protects His people. Repentance and revival spreads through Jerusalem and it will be over a hundred years, multiple generations before Babylon comes to take Judah into exile for their idolatry.

[27 : 01] History is altered. altered. Listen, Micah has been clear about the just judgment coming upon those who don't repent even among God's people.

But now, he's reminding us, y'all, that there's not just merely a way to escape by the skin of your teeth and maybe you'll survive, but there is grace and hope beyond your wildest dreams for those who turn back to the true King.

So what? What are we supposed to do? How should we now as God's people respond?

Just repent again? That's what you say every week. But yes, that is the call again. Repent. Return to God. Repentance and revival come to God's people as they lift their heads and hope in Yahweh, their King, in nothing and in no one else do they find strength.

Just as last week the awfulness of sin drives us to repent, so does the kindness of God lead us to repent. Both of those things take us to the same place.

[28 : 18] We realize we're face down in the pigsty, unworthy and desperate desperate and we remember the love of the Father eager to welcome us home and so because we remember both of those things we run back to Him, right?

That's repentance. In these terms this morning, briefly, surrender. Quit trying to be the strong one.

Micah's message clearly calls for us to give up hope in ourselves trying to manage our struggles. True repentance means that we quit doing penance.

I'm so prone to this. I see my weakness and my sin, I call that bad will and I resolve to actually instead of being bad will, I'm going to be good will, right?

It's actually just another idol. I'll try harder. I'll preach better next week. I'll lead stronger next time. Then maybe I'll be good enough.

[29 : 29] No. Repentance, that's penance. Repentance turns from my weakness to God's strength. From my sin and idolatry to His forgiveness and His righteousness.

It means I pray more and more desperately. Not just add 10 hours of study next week to perfect the sermon. It means I read about God's grace being sufficient for my weakness.

Not just try to convince myself I'm strong enough not to need Him. It means you plead with Him to forgive your failings and then in the joy of His grace you plead with Him to strengthen you, to live for His glory and quit chasing your own idols for your own pleasure.

That's repentance. And our repentance looks like something doesn't it? It has fruit. We actually surrender and then strangely enough having surrendered we then fight.

Strange. But the same passage here that tells us to embrace our weakness and find strength only in God also says now we walk in the name of the Lord our God.

[30 : 43] Living out day by day the life of a well cared for child who now has the freedom and the resources to be an instrument of hope and justice and peace in the lives of others.

That's not just for pastors that's for all of us right? That's what we get to do. This passage tells us arise and muster the troops and fight together against the darkness and sin. All idols that would set themselves up against Yahweh.

We're to be fighting. By the way that's why you need gospel community. What Mark and Anna were talking about in the video earlier. That's why we need each other to fight together in each other's lives for King Jesus right?

You need that I need that. See repentance means I give up hope in myself. It means when I run back desperately to God I find a restored relationship with Him worth shaping my life around no matter what it costs.

And then it means I hope this may be the most encouraging part. Give me 30 more seconds. I hope because I'm on His team I'm in His family now and the promises of my Father are incredible.

[32 : 01] Did you hear them? I look out from the wall and all of a sudden the Assyrians are routed. I go home and my neighborhood and my family they're turning to God they're praising Him.

My kids and their friends and my grandkids worship Him faithfully because they see how great He is. Friends the future vision that God paints for us is glorious.

That's what He's doing. I may be lame afflicted cast off undeserving outnumbered inconsistent too weak too young too old too sinful too ashamed too damaged and that may be true but it's not all that's true.

Jesus has come and He is so strong and so glorious and so gracious that He will use me and us to bring revival to see nations come to worship Him to see people with no interest in Him today tomorrow run back to Him to see neighbors who are running away from God and don't want to talk to you seated at His table with you at peace forever.

He says that's what He's going to do and we'll be there with them and have all we ever need why? Because He is there and what a day that will be.

[33 : 34] That day's coming. Hopeless brothers and sisters that day is coming see it it's coming because we are weak but He is strong.

Let's pray. God our hope is in You. Turn our hearts back towards You even in this moment as we reflect on our weakness as we reflect on Your greatness and grace.

as we look ahead to a day we can hardly imagine will be anywhere near as glorious as You promise us it will be. Give us hope in that in Jesus' name.

Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org Send a Bible and like get Laurie and I hope when he embracered and eventually send me at prince by chicken