

# Micah 1 "God Is My Witness?"

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

I want to tell you how excited I am about this new sermon series, except I don't want to lie to you. I'm actually still quite a bit hesitant myself about the minor prophets.

Maybe you feel that way when you hear me say it. But several weeks ago, as I'd been feeling God leading me in this direction, I sat down and read through all 12 of the minor prophets at one time. It doesn't take all that long. They're pretty short. And I was pretty emotionally drained at the end of that. It's hard to read.

It's convicting. I really wanted to go back to Luke. And maybe even after three years in Luke, some of you might ask for that soon. Luke again. Maybe not. But most of us don't know much about the minor prophets, if we're honest.

[ 1 : 05 ] My dad tells the story of an old seminary professor who always on his final exam asked for the list of the kings of Israel. And that got to be well known among the students of this seminary and was passed down class after class.

Be ready. Be ready. List the kings of Israel. Until one year, a young seminary student got to the final exam and he turned to the list section and it said, list the minor prophets.

And that surprised and stumped student wrote cleverly, far be it from me to refer to any of God's prophets as minor.

As for the kings of Israel, they were... Maybe you'd answered the question kind of like that.

But as you can see from this slide, the minor prophets, although they're minor because they're shorter, have a really significant, a major message for us.

[ 2 : 06 ] It's repent. It's an important message. It's sometimes a hard message. That day as I read through these, just the weight of conviction in my own heart and life, about our hearts and lives together as I get just a window into that one after another painful conviction, difficult struggle.

But what an important message God gives his prophets. To call his people back to him from wherever else they're chasing life and meaning and fulfillment to come back to him again. Remember, God's people were to have this special relationship with him, right? He was their God who delivered them, who loved them, who provided for them. And they, in response, were to trust and rest in him.

To delight in him and in following his ways. As a result, they were going to be a light to the nations, right? That the ends of the earth would know the glory of the one true God, Yahweh.

That everyone would know the beauty of living in this relationship with him, exactly what they were created for a glorious relationship. What a glorious purpose God's people have.

[ 3 : 31 ] So often it wasn't enough for God's people, was it? They wandered from him over and over. And with the prophets, he's turning their hearts back to him again.

Some of us benefit from visuals for where we are in the story when we get to the prophets. About 1050 BC, God grants his people's request for a king like the nations.

And Saul and David and Solomon rule over a united Israel for 120 years. God dwells among his people in the temple in Jerusalem.

They worship him and bring sacrifices to him there. And he promises that a king in the line of David will lead them after him. When Solomon dies, however, the kingdom splits with 10 of the 12 tribes going north.

Jeroboam leads these tribes up north where Samaria becomes the capital. And he builds another place of worship. A new temple, so to speak.

[ 4 : 44 ] As a result of their pursuit of their own plans. Their neglect of that special relationship with God. Ignoring repeated warnings from the prophets.

Following a king that's not even an heir of David. He's a rival to the throne. Israel's taken into exile by Assyria in 722 BC.

That's the northern kingdom. In the south, Judah keeps the Davidic heir on the throne. They stay put with Jerusalem and the temple.

And they're the ones we're going to follow this fall as some prophets come to them. They look a little better. They do some things right.

And it's easy to feel that God is blessing them because of all these right things they're doing.

Because when the prophet Micah shows up in about 740 BC.

[ 5 : 43 ] Judah is enjoying a great time of prosperity. Things are going great. God seems to be blessing them. But it's actually a season of prosperity and promiscuity.

Sound familiar? Within God's own special people even, there's moral debauchery all over the place. Living against God's commands.

And there's the constant temptation to look for human solutions to their problems. To look to political power and mighty Assyria or Egypt to help them.

To look for economic power for themselves to provide for themselves. Rather than God's solution which is turn back to me. That's why Micah and others come to say repent.

You have a special relationship with Yahweh. A glorious purpose as his people. And the prophets speak over and over God's words to God's people.

[ 6 : 46 ] It's not merely predicting the future when you think of the prophets. Oftentimes, what they're primarily doing is speaking God's worth. Calling his people to repentance and revival.

Renewed relationship with him. As Micah does that for many years, he's ignored. But in his particular case, revival does eventually come in Judah.

God delivers them from the Assyrian invasion. They're not taken into exile then. For about a hundred years, multiple generations of God's people are transformed in relationship with God.

And as a result, bless the nations. Millions of people return to God through this revival. And exile is forestalled for generations. The hope of revival like that is another reason I'm excited to be in the prophets together.

We've begun over the last couple years talking about and praying for revival. For God to work in great ways in this city and beyond. And we've seen more recently how that must begin in our hearts.

[ 8 : 01 ] In God's church where one another means to lock arms, to live for his glory and be passionately on his mission. Repentance begins with the people of God, doesn't it?

We are the heirs of this story of God's special relationship. And the wandering from it. That's our story too.

We then are the ones who need to hear, repent. We'll talk a lot about repentance as a heart grieving broken relationship with God.

Turning to God and rejoicing in restored relationship. And we may wander from God in some different ways from his people centuries ago.

But the idolatry in our hearts is very much the same. And thankfully, it's the same God that we wander away from.

[ 9 : 05 ] That calls us back to himself and reminds us of the joy we find only in him. The beauty of how he designed us to live in relationship with him.

As we get started, I'll tell you, seeing our sin is going to hurt. The prophets are a bit pointed. Okay? It's going to hurt. But we need it to.

I'd ask you to pray with me as we start this journey. That God will show us our sin more deeply and clearly. That we might run back to him and experience the joy of revival that comes when we repent to a gracious God.

Who's full of steadfast love and mercy. Let's pray for that together now. And then we'll dive in to God's word through Micah. Father, we bow before you to pray what I've learned is a dangerous prayer.

That you would search us and know our hearts. That you would show us our idols. Some of them we know, Father.

[10:20] Others we refuse to see. Would you show them to us and would you help us to hate them? Father, by your spirit, come and as you do that, revive us again.

That we may rejoice in you. And in your steadfast love. That it may be our life. Holy Spirit, come and speak to us personally.

Speak to us corporately as your people to direct us after our God. We ask in his name. Amen. Micah chapter 1 today.

I'll read only the first four verses for now. But keep your Bible open there. We'll make it through the whole chapter. This chapter sets up well for one helpful way to study God's word on your own. So I'll just mention it to you this morning as you read a passage and you're wondering, how do I think about this or understand it? One way is you can ask three questions. What do I learn about God?

[11:30] Then what do I learn about myself? And then, so what? What does that change in what I believe or how I live?

That's just one way to do it that we'll use this morning. In these first few verses, Micah, whose name, by the way, means, Who is like Yahweh?

Micah begins by giving us a tremendous but troubling vision of the one true God.

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Hear, you peoples, all of you. Pay attention, O earth and all that is in it. And let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from His holy temple.

[12:29] For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under Him and the valleys will split open like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

Wow. Yahweh, in great glory, our God is an awesome God.

He reigns with earth-spanning authority here. All you peoples, the whole earth, pay attention because He's coming. And all peoples and all of His creation will be impacted by the arrival and the glory of this God.

He's making clear He's no tribal deity, just over one nation or one aspect of your life. No, no, this is God over all.

Micah echoes the heart of Psalm 97. The Lord reigns. Let the earth rejoice. Let the many coastlands be glad. Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him.

[13:43] Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. Fire goes up before Him. Burns up His adversaries all around. His lightnings light up the world. The earth sees and trembles.

The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim His righteousness and all the people see His glory. All worshipers of images are put to shame who make their boast in worthless idols.

Worship Him, all you gods. There is no rival to this great God. All others bow to worship Him.

When He shows up, in fact, the earth trembles. Which if you've been in an earthquake, makes you feel small and helpless pretty quick, doesn't it?

We sang of the holy, holy, holy God. His holiness is literally earth-shaking.

[14:50] He comes out of His holy temple and it's more terrifying than any powerful thunderstorm you've ever been stuck in. Or any volcanic eruption you've watched.

Valleys crack in pieces. His mighty mountains melt like wax and just run away like water. Micah doesn't want you to go home today just knowing that God is strong and powerful.

You've heard that. He wants you to feel it. Right? Last year, my family and I went to visit my sister who now lives in Denver, Colorado.

We'd never seen the Rocky Mountains before. And we got over there looking forward to that. And the night that we rolled into Denver, fog had descended.

And storms that severely limited visibility for the next few days. And my sister kept saying, these amazing mountains are all around you. But we couldn't see them.

[15:56] And finally, the morning we were driving away, the clouds lifted. The sun broke through. And all of a sudden, whoa. The majesty and grandeur of the mountains was breathtaking.

They were around us all the time, right? And now we see them. I think I need an experience like that with God.

I think we all do. Where we've been told that he's there all around us all along. We've heard that. We've believed that he's powerful and impressive and sure.

But then the fog lifts from our eyes. And we actually get a glimpse of his majesty and grandeur way beyond mountains, y'all. Because when he comes, the mountains themselves just melt into wax and disappear into nothing.

Kids, can you even imagine how big, how powerful God is? You're going to learn about that in your classes this morning.

[ 17 : 05 ] About how he's so great that he created everything you see out of nothing. He's greater than anything you've ever seen or imagined.

May we repent of our small thoughts of God. I have way too many small thoughts of God. He's great.

And then finally we see his earth-shattering judgment. That this real and awesomely majestic God is coming from his temple.

And he's coming to witness against you people. Yikes. You may have heard someone use the phrase, as God is my witness.

But have you really thought if you want God as your witness? You want to think about that for just a second? You're in the courtroom. On trial.

[ 18 : 06 ] And God is called as the witness who steps to the stand to testify. The one who knows everything about you. He's seen everything you've done.

He's heard every careless word from your tongue. He's even known every single thought in your mind and longing in your heart. And Micah says, this is a warning.

He's coming to witness against you. Think honestly about that for a minute. What are you afraid he might say?

What might he expose that no one else knows? What might he testify about that you haven't been willing to admit?

Even to yourself. But he knows you better than you know yourself. Psalm 50. The mighty one.

[ 19 : 09 ] God the Lord speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty. God shines forth. Our God comes.

He does not keep silence. Before him is a devouring fire. Around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth that he may judge his people. Gather to me my faithful ones who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

But heavens declare his righteousness for God himself is judge. Hear, O my people, and I will speak. O Israel, I will testify against you.

Do you feel why the earth is trembling? Do you feel a bit of the awesome greatness of God?

The judge of all who sees and knows everything about you and now steps out of the judge's seat to the witness stand to testify against you for not being as holy, holy, holy as he is?

[ 20 : 15 ] If you're feeling a bit of that, that's right. God says. The reason why all of this is happening, why the judge of all is leaving his holy temple to come shake the earth, is the sin of his people.

Verse 5. All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?

And what's the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Therefore, I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I'll 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 I will lay waste. For from the fee of a prostitute she gathered them, and to the fee of a prostitute they shall return.

The capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem, highlighted as representative of the idolatrous worship of all God's people.

[ 21 : 27 ] But Micah begins with the northern kingdom, Israel, Samaria. Devastating words. That actually come true within a decade or two of Micah speaking them at the hands of Assyria.

Laid waste. Why? Why would God do this to his people? Well, they keep chasing idols, don't they? Running from him, looking for life in places other than him. Yes, the God of sexual license is one we bow down before often today, as they did.

But the prostituting unfaithfulness referenced here is spiritual as well. In bowing before any of those other gods, not merely the ones practicing fertility cults.

The high places, the church sanctuaries of Samaria are full of images of wood and stone.

[ 22 : 36 ] Not to mention the idols they're bringing in their own hearts when they walk into those places to worship. You got that image in your head? Walking into the sanctuary for worship, and it's one idol after another, and then people full of them filing in.

That's where we have to be willing to see our propensity to idolatry. Y'all, this is not just a couple of times where this pops up here and there in the Old Testament, right?

You know, an idol here, and then several books later. No, no. It's a constant battle, isn't it? Will we bow down to God or seek life and fulfillment through other means, mixing in our own ideas with some of his?

There's always some Yahweh worship worked in there, right? I mean, at least on Sundays. But where is idolatry creeping in amongst God's people?

Micah's going to get more specific as his prophecy continues. But for now, I just want us to start praying and asking God to show us what our idolatry looks like.

[ 23 : 50 ] It may be a little different. How does it show up? How do we seek life and value and meaning anywhere but God? I want you to start praying that.

Honestly, I've had a little head start on those prayers in the last few weeks. I'm even more convinced than ever that John Calvin is right about our hearts being idol factories.

We just, we churn them out, y'all. I've actually just started a list on my desk because I can't remember the ones that God brings to mind in my heart. I've been writing them down.

There's a list. You can't go in there. On my desk. I'd encourage you to do that as you pray and as God brings things to your heart. Something about writing them down helps me see the reality.

It helps me know how to pray, where I need to repent, how desperate I am for God to come in my life. Pray that and ask him to work.

[ 24 : 55 ] Because here's the danger that I think we face as we walk through prophets like this over the coming weeks. The danger is thinking Micah, for example, is talking to anyone else but me and us.

Right? Will, this was a long time ago. He's just talking to people several hundred years ago. There's some other religions facing judgment like this.

Maybe some other churches even who aren't quite as holy as we are. That's what Judah would have thought. Yeah, Micah, you tell Israel and Samaria what's coming.

Wrong king. Wrong temple. They don't even know how to worship Yahweh. And Micah says what? Verse 8.

For this I will lament and wail. I will go stripped and naked. I will make lamentation like the jackals and mourning like the ostriches. For her wound is incurable and it has come to Judah.

[ 26 : 00 ] It has reached to the gate of my people to Jerusalem. This idolatry that causes me to mourn and wail like a screaming ostrich.

I don't even know what that sounds like. It has reached all the way to Judah and crept right into Jerusalem where God lives.

In other words, we learn about ourselves. That even our proper religion can't protect us. But our church teaches the Bible.

But we're in a small group. But we have family worship regularly. Good. And very good.

But don't presume that keeps idolatry out. Don't assume that outward religious practices create pure hearts.

[ 26 : 58 ] Don't believe that God is satisfied with a relationship with you where you've checked some of those nice boxes. Is it just possible that hearts have mixed worship of self with worship of God right here in these views?

Is that possible? Can people build their lives around success or comfort or pleasure even while singing holy, holy, holy and be thou my vision?

You bet we can. Y'all, it's much more than possible. We live it, don't we? We must see it in our lives and heed God's warning.

Micah wants God's people to see it. So what he does is take a trip through the towns of Judah. And he uses word plays to convict and warn the people.

You and I don't recognize these because we don't speak Hebrew. But he makes puns on the names of the towns. We're very important to say what they'll really experience for their idolatry. [ 28 : 10 ] For example, verse 10. Bethlehem is house of dust. He says you'll be rolling in the dust in mourning. Verse 13, Lachish, a horse town that harnessed horses to chariots to lead them for Judah's army.

You've led the nation into sin. Verse 15, Marashah, the heir, the possessor. It's a good thing, but you'll actually have a possessor come conquer you.

You get the idea? All these warnings like saying Huntsville, you will be the hunted ones. Or Southwood, your fortunes will go south and your wood will burn in the flames of God's judgment. It's that kind of thing. You get the idea. All the towns around Jerusalem, you're not protected by your nearness to the things of God. You must turn back to the heart of God himself.

The awesome, holy, just God is coming against you. And he sees and knows all your sin.

[ 29 : 19 ] So what? Give up? How do we respond to realizing these truths in our own lives?

Well, one step at a time, Micah's going to fill out his call to repentance through the book. And he'll offer specific words of hope as soon as next week.

Hang in there. It's not all just like this. But in this chapter, we get only the beginnings of an appropriate response. Verse 16, It's mourning.

Micah himself has modeled this, hasn't he? Remember verse 8? Wailing and running naked. This is another picture here of the sorrow we are to have over sin.

Because it breaks our relationship with God. And what could possibly be worse? What could be more worthy of our tears than that?

[ 30 : 31 ] Have you cried over sin lately? Not just over its effects, although that's good too. But have you wept over how your idolatry distances you from the God who made you to huddle up close to him and live there?

And you keep walking away. That's where true repentance begins, isn't it? Grieving that broken relationship and despairing of self.

The pictures here, naked, bald, empty handed, right? That's the idea. The solution is not in me. I can't fix what I've broken. I can't love God and neighbor consistently as I should.

God, I give up. God, I give up. You are holy. And worthy of my worship. My heart is so prone to wander.

And I grieve that I have yet again wandered away from you and can't get back. That's where Micah leaves God's people here.

[ 31 : 39 ] Crying out, mourning. But they are God's people. My people, he says. And even the exile away from my land is part of turning their hearts back to me again.

It is absolutely right that we should come to this table mourning in light of our sin. It is absolutely right we should come to the end of ourselves and our ability to fix this.

And it's important for us to know that's where God is. We turn to the only place left to a God who does what we can't.

To a Savior who covers us with his perfection. To a spirit who says, Blessed are those who mourn over their sin for they will be comforted.

That's why Jesus took the bread. He broke it. And gave it to his broken and failing followers.

[ 32 : 55 ] And said, Take, eat. This is my body. Broken for you. Who should have been the ones broken?

Do this in remembrance of me. And then he took the cup. And said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Because your blood was on the line. Your life should have been forfeit for your sins. And I came. So do this in remembrance of me.

If you don't know and trust Jesus. Heed Micah's warning. That you're not coming. And pretend something is true between you and God.

That's not because he knows. But rather come and let us pray with you. Let us tell you about the only safe place there is for sinners like us.

[ 33 : 50 ] And that's in Jesus. And we'd love to share that with you. If you do know and trust Jesus. Mourn your sin.

Even now. As we prepare to come here. It's right that we should. And then run up here to taste hope. Finally.

Micah didn't get there today. But Jesus did. He's come to give you a taste of his grace. And so mourn. And then eat.

And rejoice together. Let's pray. Father we have no right to be here. On our own.

We haven't even had the chance to let you show us the depth of the idolatry in our hearts. But we know that it is there.

[ 34 : 50 ] Even beyond what we're willing to see. And so we come and cry out to you. And ask for your help. And we are so grateful to find that you've already come after us.

And sent your son to take what we deserved. And so as we taste this. Would your grace be sweet to our hearts. Would it make us mourn our sin even more.

But would it give us joy in you. Greater than we've known previously. We ask in Jesus name. Amen. For more information.

Visit us online at southwood.org. M■ perhaps.

To be continued... Just to point out...22 I'm back to... ...

[ 35 : 57 ] Do no questions. Not to ■■■■■■■■■■ good. That comes with us. Absolutely. That helps you to love. Let's go towards us.ando