

Micah 7 "God Still Loves You...Really!"

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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.

That wonderful, difficult song we just heard is the heart of Micah chapter 7 set to music. And you can hear and feel both the pain, some really hard things in there, especially when we look at ourselves.

And you can hear the joy too, can't you? The hope that comes when we look to our God. In fact, as you turn to Micah 7 this morning, in many ways this last chapter of Micah is a helpful summary of the whole book.

So the themes will sound familiar to you if you've been here the past few weeks. So let's pray together this morning and ask for God's help as we look at His Word together.

Father, we need You. And we ask for You to send Your Spirit in our midst today to teach our hearts to open them to hearing Your Word.

[1 : 23] As we read it and as it is preached, we need You to use it not merely in our heads, but in our hearts. Because we need You.

So would we know You more? And this time we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to focus this morning on the end of this chapter.

It's glorious and hopeful. It's where we're going to spend most of our time. But before we get there, we need to ache with Micah first.

He picks up here, as you just heard, with a lament over what he sees in his heart and in the people around him.

God's people who have, by and large, turned away from God and decided they're going to run in other directions. And he says he looks and he feels despairing and empty like a tree picked clean of fruit.

[2 : 30] Verse 1. Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned. There is no cluster to eat, no first ripe fig that my soul desires.

The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind. They all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net. Their hands are on what is evil to do it well.

The prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul. Thus they weave it together. The best of them is like a briar, the most upright of them a thorn hedge.

The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come. Now their confusion is at hand. Put no trust in a neighbor. Have no confidence in a friend.

Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms. For the son treats the father with contempt. The daughter rises up against her mother. The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own house.

[3 : 35] Yikes. It's as hard reading them as singing them, isn't it? You can hear the echoes of Micah's words in earlier chapters, can't you? From the people to their leaders who are supposed to be the ones who know how to turn them back to God, but who are leading the charge away from him.

It's every man for himself. No one to be trusted. Violence, treachery, broken relationships, corrupt systems.

A lot of people playing church, right? Going to the temple talking about God, but living however they please. That's what Derek reminded us of during our confession from Micah chapter 6.

God makes it simple and straightforward. Do justice, love, kindness, walk humbly with your God. And we make our life's work, our heart's passion.

Not this wonderful relationship with God that he's called us into, but comfort for self. And so Micah cries out in the face of this brokenness, Woe is me!

[4 : 52] It's the language of lament. Lament. The Bible's full of it. From the Psalms, through the prophets and other places. God's people crying out in honest pain and grief.

From the sin they see in their own heart, the brokenness around them. Lament is honesty and desperation at the same time.

Seeing life clearly and acknowledging that it's not what it's supposed to be. Maybe you've felt that. God, help us. We have so much to share but are so driven by selfish desires. We live for this life and not for eternity.

Many of us lack zeal and the most passionate burnout. We elevate one we respect and he falls morally or abandons the faith.

[5 : 56] We even attack each other and kick those who have fallen while they're down. Oh God, help! For we're a mess! Micah's been full of lament, hasn't he?

A lot of that in this prophecy. Prophecy. I'd ask us, where have we been convicted of our sin? I don't know what God has put on your heart in the past few weeks as we've studied this prophecy together.

I don't know what heavy thing you may have brought in this morning on your heart. But lament is a language we need to learn better.

Crying out. It's just what ought to be done when we see these. Crying out like Micah for the sin in our hearts. For the corruption of God's people. Oh, we're not what we ought to be, God.

For the brokenness of the culture around us. All of that is right. Right. Often tears are appropriate in this life. It's through them that we're actually seeing most clearly and most rightly.

[7 : 08] We're seeing that on our own there is no hope. Not a little bit. Not maybe for the best of us. No hope. We've abandoned the one who made us.

Who's the only source of life. And we can't make our way back to him. And so we lament. And then Micah's lament shifts.

He looks around and sees all of that and cries out. Then he says, but as for me, I will never be faithless. I would never betray a friend.

I will do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. No, No, that's actually not. Where he starts.

Verse 7. But as for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation.

[8 : 08] My God will hear me. As for me, I will look where? To Yahweh. The only thing that gives us hope in the face of the brokenness of our hearts and our world is a clear vision of God.

That's what Micah. There's only one thing. There's only one place to look. The hope is not in us. It's not in social progress. Maybe all of us together will do better.

It's not in personal improvement. Well, maybe the rest of them will fail, but I can pull through. No. It's in God himself. And so Micah turns our eyes to God.

And that's where his prophecy will end. With this glorious vision of who our God truly is. And we so need it.

It might not be new information to you this morning. But y'all, we have a lot of broken pictures of God. That maybe even we don't realize we have. But they distort our relationship with him so that we don't see him and know him as he wants us to.

[9 : 22] And Micah wants us to see God. And when we see him clearly, we see a God, yes, full of holiness and justice.

But a God of love. Of steadfast love. Forgiving love. Unfailing love beyond our comprehension.

One of my favorite things in the world is scooping my girls up in my arms. And talking with them about how much I love them. It doesn't happen as often as it used to anymore.

But one morning this week, Lily woke up early and came downstairs. And I got to scoop her up in my arms and talk with her for a little bit.

And I just sat there in the chair and held her and said, Do you know Daddy loves you so much? She said, Yes. I said, Why does Daddy love you?

[10 : 25] Because he does. Yeah, yeah, because you're my girl. Yeah, Daddy's sweet girl. Yeah, yeah, that's right. I said, Does Daddy love you because you always do everything right?

She knows that answer. She said, No. I said, Does Daddy love you because you got A's on your report card? No. Does Daddy love you because you scored a goal in the soccer game?

Yes. Yes. I have a cute, creative six-year-old. I said, But what if tonight you kick the ball in the other goal?

Will Daddy still love you? She said, Yes. I said, What if you clipped down at school today? She started getting tired of the questioning. Yes, you will always love me because I am your girl. I wasn't tired of it. I said, Don't you ever forget that. Don't ever, ever forget that. I think that we, more than we admit, need to have that conversation with our Heavenly Father.

[11 : 36] That's what Micah wants here. He wants you to end in your father's arms, gazing in your lament into the eyes of your loving, forgiving, gracious God.

Listen to verses 18 through 20. Who is a God like you? Pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance.

He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

Who is a God like you? That's what Micah's name means. Let's marvel together for just a few minutes.

[12 : 45] Who is like Yahweh? Well, what is he like? What's at his very core? What makes God's heart happy?

One of my distorted visions of God is that he is just like me and many parents that I know. I call this the adoring fan. You know, he stands on the sidelines cheering me on, hoping I make a great play. And when I do, he's so proud. He jumps up and runs onto the field and picks me up and says, that's my boy. He did it. Look at verse 18 again.

Who is a God like you? Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression? He does not retain his anger forever.

He delights in steadfast love. What makes God's heart happy is his steadfast love.

[13 : 52] Love that enters what? Our sin, iniquity and transgression and loves us right there. It's not when I hit a home run that he cheers the loudest.

It's even when I strike out that he runs to embrace me and says, that's my boy. I love you. It's like the father of the prodigal son, right?

He sees him at his lowest point, covered in pig slop. And he runs out to him and embraces him and says, my boy, welcome home.

No other fathers acted like that. But he delighted to. He rejoiced in it. Who is like our God?

This heart of love is where God begins when he's introducing himself. All the way back in Exodus 34, he's talking to Moses. He says, the Lord, the Lord, it's his name, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

[15 : 15] Steadfast love, steadfast love for thousands, forgiving. This is who I am, God says. So there's hope in your lowest, at your worst, because our relationship involves not joy in your successes, but delight in forgiving your failures.

Can you believe that? He doesn't just tolerate that. He loves to do it. That's why Micah says here in verse 8 that it's in his deep darkness that Yahweh will be a light to him.

That in the midst of exile and the destruction of Jerusalem, God will actually come and rebuild the walls and extend the boundaries of the city. Verse 11. Verse 14.

When his people are most alone, they're neglected, feeling lost, he will shepherd them and provide richly for them.

What amazing grace that enters into those places, love that goes so far beyond what his people ever deserved and pours out blessing on them and loves every second of it.

[16 : 34] That's who our God is and what he delights to do. He loves to love you. Will, I've messed up again.

I don't deserve for anyone to love me, he said. Substance addiction was wreaking havoc on this friend who was in my office a few months ago.

But we all have our addictions, don't we? Those sins we keep going back to over and over. The idols we consistently serve.

The failures we've begun to give up on. And what he said to me in my office that day is true. I don't deserve for anyone to love me.

I said, that's right. The good news is that's not all that's true. God loves people who don't deserve it, doesn't he?

[17 : 44] But what if I've messed up again? He will again have compassion on us, tread our iniquities underfoot, cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Don't you love that word, again? You messed up again, but Yahweh has compassion again. See, sometimes I can get on board with God being patient and loving.

You know, the God of second chances, right? Y'all, I've blown a lot of second and third chances. Anyone else? It's so much better than that.

I have this vision of God being like an umpire. You know, one strike, okay. Nobody's perfect. Two strikes, hey, be careful. You're pushing it a little bit.

Three strikes, you're out. Don't come to me. Don't keep messing up and come back here. Learn your lesson. Micah says, no way.

[18 : 54] No way. No matter how many times God's people have blown it, over and over, idol after idol, he will again have compassion and forgive their sins.

You know why? God's love keeps no record of wrongs. 1 Corinthians 13. Psalm 130 says, if you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, if you were counting and keeping track of all my mistakes, Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love. With him is plentiful redemption.

He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. Steadfast love again. Plentiful redemption. He will forgive again.

And he's shown it. He doesn't just talk about it. He's shown it with his people, hasn't he? Just marvel for a minute. But think with me that there's Adam in the garden who disobeys God when God was very clear about what he should or should not do.

[20 : 02] And yet, God doesn't stop loving. He promises to send a savior. And then Noah, the best guy left in his day, after the flood and God saving him, Noah gets drunk.

But God hangs a rainbow in the sky because of his steadfast love. Abraham lied and endangered his wife, but God promised to keep loving him and his descendants, generation after generation. And when he sends Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, they complain and want to go back. But God still delivers them through the Red Sea. That wasn't enough.

God's people doubted his care in the wilderness for 40 years and God responds and feeds them every day and leads them to the promised land.

David chose violent immorality. But God promised to forgive and put his descendant on the throne forever. Jonah ran away from God, wanted nothing to do with him or his love.

[21 : 16] But God sent a storm, a whale, a plant, and a wind all to chase Jonah down and show him the beauty of his love.

And we get all the way here to Micah and now God's sending his people into exile for their persistent idolatry. But at the same time, promising that those who turn back and trust him will yet again for the millionth time, what?

Be forgiven and loved and brought back to him. And you think he's counted you out for too many strikes? No way! You can't out-sin his grace or out-run his love.

Will he not revive us again in our day with this kind of love? Doesn't that do something to you? There's no one like this God.

He keeps forgiving again and again. But how will God look at me then?

[22 : 26] I mean, really? I've had some people say that they forgave me before, but our relationship got pretty distant. A lot of hurt there.

A lot of coldness. Certainly, I'm on probation with God, right? I mean, it's been a lot, Will. Plus, I feel like he sees and knows everything.

He's kind of like an Olympic judge and I'm doing a gymnastics routine and he doesn't miss anything. Every little stumble, tenth of a point. Every misstep, ooh, half a point.

You may still be on the beam, but lose your balance even a little bit and it will be counted against you, right? Look at verse 19 one more time. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. How's our relationship with God? After all the againsts he has to forgive?

[23 : 34] I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. Jeremiah 31, 34. Psalm 103.

He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities. As high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Do you hear what this is saying? It's not that God can't think of sins anymore like he just can't come up with it. It's that they're not connected to us. When he thinks of his children it's in love not connected to our sin. Remember he delights in steadfast love.

He's not looking to count something against you. That's not the way his heart is. He has trampled our sins underfoot. He has cast our sins into the depths of the sea no longer on us as far away as you can imagine.

[24 : 47] Imagine that. washed away from us. Every year Orthodox Jews on Rosh Hashanah will go to a river and empty their sins out of their pockets into the water and watch them symbolically wash away.

Never able to find them again right? Couldn't possibly track them down and link them back to me. That's actually the picture here casting them into the depths of the sea.

And in verse 18 pardoning iniquity not merely my specific sins but my sinful nature who I am God actually lifts that burden from me and takes it on himself.

John Bunyan pictures it famously in Pilgrim's Progress as Christian has journeyed long with the burden of sin on his back until as he nears the celestial city this great picture up this way therefore did burdened Christian run but not without great difficulty because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending and upon that place stood a cross and a little below in the bottom a sepulcher kids that's a fancy word for tomb okay sepulcher so I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up to the cross his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back and began to tumble and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher where it fell in and I saw it no more at the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus our sin rolls away and is no more amen and so God loves you he can't he loves you even as he hates sin he loves you because he looks at you and sees not your failure but his son's success in your place it's amazing love isn't it close your eyes for a minute this morning

[27 : 09] I want you to think of your worst sin what is it that sticks to you and you feel you can never get away from it can't get the shame of it off of you imagine that sin being placed on Jesus at the cross being buried forever in his empty tomb washing away with the rushing river into the depths of the sea can you see that happening friend if you trust God this is what he does for you that's what his love is like he takes it away forever and loves and delights in you if you've never known love like that you can experience it today right now maybe you've been at church many times or for many years and thought that

God was someone to keep your distance from lest he catch you he would catch you doing something wrong and get you for it Micah says you'll end up broken and hopeless hiding from him but the God of the Bible is actually looking to catch you he is he's coming to catch you so that he can scoop you up in his arms and embrace you and hold you forgive you and love you forever with a love that will never let you go that's why he's looking for you he sent his son Jesus to take earth's worst for you so that you could have heaven's best now and forever who is a God like you pardoning iniquity passing over transgression delighting in steadfast love he's the one we all need to see this morning

I don't know what you've done each of you I don't know how long you've been cold to God but I know that it is no match for his grace your sins not bigger than his grace your hearts not so cold that his love can't warm it and he loves to do that do you see him clearly for the first time maybe do you see him clearly ready to forgive you again this morning do you see him longing to have you run back into his arms to trust him afresh rather than what you're doing right now hiding from him in your struggle and pain do you do you hear and see your father wanting to welcome you home and hold you and tell you how much he loves you y'all why would we run anywhere else but to him he's a God of steadfast love cry out to him even now come talk with us more about his love after the service kids

I want to read you one more picture of God's love this morning will y'all come up here and sit on the steps as we finish the sermon so you can hear it really well let's sit over here this is a book I get to read with my kids sometimes written by a guy named Brian Chappell it's a book that helps us learn

about how much God loves us okay the title is I'll love you anyway and always okay see the little girl in that picture that little girl's name is Katie okay Katie poured water from her watering can onto the flower bed her mother was planting petunias near the house Katie you can water all the flowers mother told her except for daddy's favorite it's a very special flower called an orchid and only daddy knows how much water it needs so Katie watered all the flowers in the garden she knew the water would make the flowers grow more beautiful then she thought daddy wants his orchid to be beautiful I'll water it for him too she put a deep pool of water around the purple flower Katie did not know that the orchid could only drink a little water at a time and as the afternoon wore on the orchid began to wilt and its beautiful blossoms fell to the ground it's a sad flower isn't it that evening after dinner the family went out into the yard to enjoy the cool air Katie's daddy happened to glance over at his orchid and a look of shock and sorrow crossed his face when he saw the withered flower what happened to my orchid he said

Katie hung her head in shame why hadn't she obeyed finally she whispered I watered it I'm so sorry tears came to her eyes daddy you're sad because I hurt your flower will you still love me Katie's father took his little girl into his arms because you disobeyed he said you and I are both sad but but nothing you do will ever make me stop loving you I'll love you anyway and always and her daddy started to tell her stories about how God loves us Adam and Eve and Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and then God sent who do you think that is Jesus baby Jesus

[33 : 55] God's own son to save his people from their sins God made Jesus a perfect sacrifice for our sins Jesus loved us so much he took all the punishment for our sins when he suffered on the cross and so when we trust him God takes our guilt away when we ask God to forgive our sin he says guess what I'll love you anyway and always and her daddy said to her Katie now you know why nothing you do will ever make me stop loving you I will love you anyway and always let's pray Father we need that kind of love it's not just little kids who disobey their parents their parents disobey you we do what we think is best we love to live for ourselves and honestly there are many days where we wonder if you could still love us thank you thank you for

Jesus thank you for being a God who will never ever let us go and will never quit loving us thank you for sending your son so that we can believe that if you would send him for us you will never quit loving us nothing could ever separate us from your love that you've given us in Jesus pray these kids would remember that pray their pastor would remember it and their parents and all of us and we would know how much you love us and that would bring great joy to our hearts today and every day in Jesus name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org and to know and heCs in