

Shepherd King

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. I want to say to all of you mothers, happy Mother's Day. We are thankful for all of you, for the mothers that we all have, and for those of you who are called to that role.

We honor you today. Our sermon is not a Mother's Day sermon. I just want to give you a heads up so you're not expecting something different. We are instead going to continue, as is our practice here at Trinity of preaching through the Scriptures, and we are in the book of Micah.

So, just so you know where we're going this morning, that's where it is. In every great story, there is a moment of despair and crisis.

In Snow White, when the Queen transforms herself into a terrifying dragon, and we fear for the hero.

When Henry V and his bedraggled army show up to the fields of Agincourt, outnumbered 10 to 1. When, spoiler alert, at the end of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Dumbledore dies.

[1 : 1 9] Sorry, there it is. And I couldn't do this without a Lord of the Rings reference. And so, if you've read, Frodo and Sam are on the stairs of Cirith Ungol, climbing up over the mountains that are the boundary into the land of Mordor, the land that is shrouded in darkness at a time when it seems that the forces of evil are overwhelmingly powerful.

And these two little hobbits, on a seemingly hopeless task, to get into the stronghold of the enemy, to destroy the ring of power. In a conversation they have, Frodo says, you and I, Sam, are stuck in the worst place of the story.

And it's all too likely that some will say at this point, shut the book now, Dad. We don't want to read anymore. I don't know where you're at in the story of your life this morning.

Maybe you feel like you're at that lowest point. Maybe you can think back and remember what that was like. Some of you are young enough. You may not have gotten there yet.

But you will. I wish I could say otherwise. But you will. It's at these times when we just want to shut the book that we find out what we really believe about God.

[2 : 5 0] And this is what Micah is saying to us this morning. So if you want to turn with me, we're in Micah chapter 4, starting in verse 9.

We're at page 730 in your pew Bible. And we're going to go ahead and read this together and then see what God's Word has to say to us this morning.

So Micah chapter 4, starting in verse 9. Let's read God's Word together.

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 this city and dwell in the open country. You shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued.

- [3 : 56] There the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. Now many nations are assembled against you. Saying, let her be defiled. Let her eyes gaze upon Zion.
- 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 and I will make your hoofs bronze. You shall beat in pieces many people and shall devote their gain to the Lord.
- Their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth. 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.
- [5 : 05] Whose origin is from old, from ancient of days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when 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. This is the word of God according to Micah. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together. God, we pray this morning that you would help us.
- Lord, as we hear these words from so many centuries ago. Lord, we pray that you would open our hearts to receive your word. And our minds to understand it.
- Lord, I pray that we would hear the word of encouragement. In the midst of a word of warning in this passage. God, I pray for your help that you would help me to speak clearly as I ought.
- [6 : 15] And I pray for all of us that we would sit under your word. For your glory we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- In the middle of the darkness, God speaks a word of hope. This is the overall message of this section of Micah. And we're going to look at it in those two sections.
- So the first one is going to be about the dark moment in Israel. I want to spend a little bit of time giving some historical context so that you can hear and feel with the people of Israel their situation to which we believe Micah is speaking at the end of the 8th century.
- The end of the 8th century, if you remember, Assyria had come down from the north and had invaded the northern kingdom of Israel.
- The ten tribes of the northern kingdom that had broken off from Jerusalem and Judah and the southern kingdom way back in the grandchildren of King David. The northern kingdom had been conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C.
- [7 : 24] And in that conquering, they had deported people. They had razed the places of worship. And there was nothing left. And Assyria was not done.
- It was the superpower of the day. And it was continuing to threaten to expand its territory. 20 years after that invasion, Assyria came back.
- And they came down the coast. And then they turned inland towards Jerusalem. The southern kingdom of Judah, Jerusalem, the capital, found themselves threatened.

The Assyrian army was successful in overcoming some of the great strongholds of Israel. The city of Lachshish. If you go back and read the story in 2 Kings verses 18 and 19, you'll see that as he was defeating this stronghold, and it was really the last city before they could then move towards Jerusalem, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, sends a cohort of his army with an emissary.

And I want you to hear the words that this emissary speaks to the people of Jerusalem to know the kind of darkness that they were facing.

[8 : 49] So in 2 Kings 18, 28 through 35, this is the speech that the Assyrians gave. Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria.

Thus says the king, do not let Hezekiah, Hezekiah was the present king of Judah, 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 the Lord by saying, the Lord 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.

Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern. Do you remember last week when we saw the promise of that, that God gave?

The king of Assyria is taking that and saying, I will do that for you. Sorry, that's a side note. Going on, verse 32. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyard, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die.

[10 : 06] And do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, the Lord will deliver us. Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria?

Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sephar, sorry, I should have pronounced this, practiced this one, Sepharvaim, Hannah and Evai?

Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

Do you see what the Assyrian king is basically saying? You think God's going to save you, but he is not. You think your king is going to protect you, but he is not.

You think the promises that you have heard from your God will be fulfilled, but they won't. But I will. If you will simply surrender to me, give up your faith in your God, and surrender to me, I will bring you peace, prosperity, flourishing.

[11 : 21] I will bring all of these things. And of course, the people in Judah had already seen the northern kingdom fall because God has used Assyria to judge his people.

And in the southern kingdom, Micah, if you've been here for a couple of weeks, has already told the southern kingdom, you too will face God's judgment for your sin because you have already turned away from the Lord.

You have already fallen into idolatry. You have already trusted in political alliances rather than the Lord your God to provide for you and to protect you and to establish his kingdom among you.

Micah has already said, you deserve judgment. And here Micah comes back again in this passage, starting in verse 9 of chapter 4.

And he expounds a little more on what they will experience and how they are at the darkest place. Verses 4, 9, and 10. Picture this. Why do you cry aloud?

[12 : 31] It's like the prophet is mocking the people saying, where are you going to for help? Your kings have failed you. Your leaders have failed you. We saw that in chapter 3. But you're not turning to the Lord.

So you're helpless. And your suffering is so great. It's like a woman in labor, writhing in pain, groaning through this hardship.

Sorry, this is the only connection to Mother's Day I can make, and it's not a happy one. Because twice, twice Micah in these verses refers to the pain of childbirth as this overwhelming suffering that blots out any other thing.

It's so present and so overwhelming that all you can see is the pain. I talked to one mother this week, and she remembers in the midst of it thinking and even saying out loud, are you sure this is how it works?

Because it was so overwhelmingly consuming. Micah says, this is the darkness. This is the overwhelming place that the people of Israel found themselves in, facing a superior army, having forsaken their God in their hearts already and being under judgment and wondering, where do we go from here?

[13 : 57] And how easy it is for them to become overwhelmed with the pain they've already experienced and the pain they anticipate experiencing. Because we saw in verse 9, I'm sorry, in verse 10, that it's going to happen.

That they're going to have to leave Jerusalem. That they're going to go out into the wilderness. That they're going to end up in Babylon. Wondering, where are they looking? It's easy for us, in these darkest moments, to feel overwhelmed and to lose our spiritual focus.

We lose sight of God. And we think we're on our own. Sometimes our own sin is so great, the accuser of our souls comes.

And in his pride and mockery and shame, he comes to us and says, God can't ever forgive you for that. He's done with you. How could God ever love you after that?

You'll never escape it. Just give up and embrace this sin. Because you'll never be free of it. And he comes and he attacks and he speaks words like the king of Assyria.

[15 : 15] To seek to overwhelm us. And to doubt God. Sometimes we think God has abandoned us as his people. We live in a fallen church and sometimes the pain of what church leaders have done and the things that churches have done is so overwhelming that we think we want to give up.

If this is what it looks like, how can we ever go on? It feels like the darkness is winning. Maybe we turn to other places for comfort and for hope.

Sometimes the darkest points of our story are simply because we live in a fallen world where suffering happens.

We face great loss and tragedy. We face times when setbacks pile on one another and we feel battered and bruised. Every time we stand up, the wave hits again.

Sometimes people who we loved and trusted turn away and hurt us deeply. Sometimes the most cherished dreams that we have for this life go up in smoke and ashes.

[16 : 32] And it's easy in these times of darkness for our hearts and our minds to be clouded and we lose sight of God and all we see is darkness. And we tend to either despair and believe that we are alone or we turn to ourselves, maybe and we turn to ourselves, somehow thinking that by our own strength, our own power, our own cleverness, we will overcome.

At this point, it's easy to give up on God. But Micah does not merely give us these warnings. He does not merely say to us, this is what the darkness may look like to you.

Because laced through this passage, he gives us a reminder of his faithfulness, a reminder of his purposes and his plans.

The very things that we lose sight of in the middle of those hardest moments are the very things that Micah reminds us again so that we could see and so that we could have hope.

So we see, as we turn from the point of darkness to the message of hope that Micah has, we see in verse 10 that though they will go to Babylon, there you shall be rescued.

[17 : 51] From the very place that seems so far from where God could actually help, he steps in and says, I will bring you back from there. I have not abandoned you even though you are enslaved in another country again.

I will bring you back. Verses 12 and 13 are this beautiful picture because it pictures the nations gathering around Jerusalem like a bunch of vultures looking to take up the spoil of Jerusalem.

And yet what God says in verse 13 is, no, they are not gathered for their spoil, but they are gathered by me for my judgment.

They are like grain sheaves that have been gathered from the fields and have put on a threshing floor. And you know what a threshing floor is? It's a place where you beat the stalks of grain to separate the kernels from everything else.

And he says, this is what God will do to these nations. And I will empower you, my people, like a rhinoceros in Wakanda, armored and trampling all over, right?

[19 : 04] With a horn that has armor and hooves that are shod with sharp things. He says, I'm gonna trample the very ones who seem to be so overwhelming in your life right now.

And then in chapter five, verses two through five, we see the fullness of his promise. Not only is it his intent and heart to redeem, not only will he overcome his enemies, but most of all, he will raise up a leader, a shepherd ruler, to redeem his people.

Though Assyria threatens God's people and God's plan, though it looks like those things have failed, it is not so.

For though God may judge, he will not forsake. And he has a plan, and he will make it sure. And verses two through five, he says, I will raise up a shepherd king.

Let's look at what kind of shepherd king this is. Let's look at what kind of ruler this is. First of all, he is one who comes from Bethlehem. Bethlehem is the hometown of who?

[20 : 19] David. David the king. Who is the one that God promised in 2 Samuel 7 that through his line, he would establish an eternal kingdom that will stand forever.

So this one will come from Bethlehem, and he will gather God's people again from the nations out of the pain of exile, out of the 600 years between the prophecy of Micah and the fulfillment of this in the first century.

He will gather his people back, and he will begin to do this work. And through this one, he will birth a new person, a new people, I'm sorry, a new people that he will gather from every tribe and tongue and nation.

And do you see how he redeems that picture of childbirth? Just like in the judgment of God, you will suffer great pain, yet there will be a glory on the other side of it, for it will birth something new.

It will birth a new people of God with this shepherd king, this shepherd ruler who watches over it. And we see in verse 3, sorry, I lost my place here.

[21 : 39] And we see in verse 4 where he says this most clearly, 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.

This one that God will raise up will be like a shepherd. He will fight off the attacks of the wolves and the bears and the lions. He will lead the sheep into green fields where they can feed and by still waters where they can refresh themselves.

He will watch over them and he will chase down the strays when they wander away from him. He will know them and they will know him. They will know his voice and he will faithfully shepherd them and will not abandon them in trouble.

He will stand for them in the majesty of the name of the Lord their God. The majesty of the king who is knocking on the door of Jerusalem has nothing to compare to the majesty of this shepherd king.

He will come in the name of the one who is promised to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Moses, to David.

[22 : 57] The promise is that he will gather a people to himself so that he might display his glory. He will fulfill his promise and he will make his people secure, dwell securely again.

Though the king of Assyria says, no God can protect you. God says, no, there is one who can protect you and he will be their peace.

He will triumph over all of his enemies and restore his people to a place of peace. Not only peace with their enemies but peace with God. He will restore them to a new place where they will live with him, with God in their midst in all of the glory.

And Micah intends this promise to be like a light piercing the shadow of Mordor, bringing hope, meant to be a truth that brings perspective and the strength to endure in the darkest moments.

A reminder of a God who will fulfill his promise. this is the God that he points them to. This is the reminder he wants them to know of in their darkest points.

[24 : 17] And friends, we have the glory of seeing this promise fulfilled, don't we? It's what Jinhee read earlier. Well-known story that we usually only read in Christmastime.

But here we are in May reading it. Why? Because it reminds us that the God of the Bible is faithful to fulfill his promises. He is trustworthy even in the darkest moments.

And we are able to look back on what the people of Israel were called to look ahead to. They looked ahead to this coming. We look back because the Gospel of Matthew says, in the coming of Jesus Christ, the glory of David, the humility of Bethlehem, Jesus came to be this shepherd king in our darkest times.

He came as the fulfillment of all of the hopes and promises of the Old Testament. He faces the greatest enemies, not of Assyria or Babylon or Egypt, but of sin and death themselves.

And going through the suffering of the cross so that he might identify with us, he rises victorious over all of these enemies so that we might know that in him we dwell secure forever.

[25 : 42] He has made us a new kingdom, a new people, a new promise. And we can look to the cross and to the empty tomb and know God is faithful and we can entrust ourselves to him.

and this is what he wants to remind us of in the most dark moments. Eli and Katie, sorry I'm going to put you on the spot, but the rest of you can listen in for a minute.

You guys are going to get baptized in a minute, expressing faith in Jesus. And I hope that this word will stay to you, stay with you, that in the darkest moments, Jesus will be with you and Jesus will keep you.

When you sin and blow it, his salvation has secured your forgiveness. When it feels like God has abandoned you, Jesus reminds us that he is always with you to the end of the age.

When you face the sufferings and loss of a broken world, know that he will make all things new. His love for you is immovable and unchanging.

[26 : 49] He will hold you fast. And for all of us, this is the same word. This is the same truth. Though Jesus has secured our salvation, we know that we're still awaiting.

Though this king has come, he has not established the fullness of his kingdom and so we still, like Israel, look forward to the fullness of this promise coming to us. And what Micah wants us to know this morning is that in the moments of greatest darkness, let the promise of God in this passage be ours.

Don't let the trials blot out the vision of seeing God's faithfulness. Don't let the darkness overwhelm your faith. But turn to him, run to him, cling to him, for he is there and he will hold to you.

One day, the darkness will pass. One day, there will be no more end. There will be no more of these moments. One day, the dawn will rise and the sun will shine forever.

Till then, let us walk in faith. let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we thank you for this word and we pray this morning that you would push it into our hearts.

[28 : 27] Lord, help us. Help us to see you in our darkest moments. Help us to trust you when all of our circumstances tell us otherwise.

Help us to know who you are and to see that, Lord, the greatest things that threaten us here, Lord, pale in the comparison to how great you are, that you are a good shepherd, that you are a sovereign king, that you are a loving father, that you are a great God.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.