

Glorious Hope

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Would you turn with me to Micah chapter 4? That's page 730 in the Pew Bible. We will be looking at verses 1 through 8 of Micah chapter 4 today.

As you turn there, let me pray for us, and then I'll read our text. Father, what a great promise it is that Christ is ours forevermore, that you have given your own self to us in your Son and promised to hold us until the end.

Father, as we come to your word now, we pray that this great hope, this great promise would again become real to our hearts as we hear this message from Micah about the hope that you have laid up for us and that you have accomplished for us according to your good plan and purpose.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, Micah 4, verses 1 through 8. It shall come to pass in the later 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 they may walk in his paths.

[1 : 33] 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 disputes for strong nations far away.

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 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.

And 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.

[2 : 34] And the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it shall come.

The former dominion shall come. Kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. So Micah. Micah's writing and ministering in a time of great crisis.

In a time of great difficulty. If you remember back in chapter 1, verse 1, we're told that the word of the Lord came to Micah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

That's the late 8th century B.C. And it was a time of massive upheaval in ancient Israel. In fact, some Old Testament scholars think that this particular passage, this message from Micah chapter 4, was perhaps first given around 701 B.C., which was when Assyria, the great sort of superpower of the day, had invaded Judah during the reign of Hezekiah.

And in that invasion, most of the country, politically and economically, had been devastated. But if you remember, the literary context of this passage, in particular chapter 3 that we looked at last week that leads up to it, talks about the failure and the selfishness of Israel's own leaders.

[4 : 03] And it speaks of the coming judgment that will make Jerusalem, or Zion, which is another name for Jerusalem, that coming judgment would make Jerusalem a heap of ruins. Jerusalem would be plowed like a field.

So chapter 4 is a message given to people, not just in political or economic turmoil, but in spiritual turmoil, in spiritual crisis.

Their leaders had failed them, and God's judgment was coming. The whole people of God seemed to be on the verge of collapse under the weight of sin.

I wonder, how do you feel in times of crisis? How do you react?

Not just in political or economic crisis, but more importantly, in times of spiritual crisis. How do you respond? How do you react when you learn that perhaps a well-known pastor or author has failed morally?

[5 : 10] How do you feel? How do you react when you see more covetousness and greed in professing Christians than generosity and grace? How do you react when you discover that perhaps some of the things you've been taught aren't actually what God's Word says, but the twisting of God's Word by selfish and self-centered teachers?

Micah was confronting all of those things in his day, and so do we. And Micah has been pointing these things out in the first three chapters, calling for lament, for grief and sorrow over these things, and he's been calling for repentance, for confession and turning away from sin.

For the past few weeks, we've been considering these messages of judgment, of lamentation, this call to repentance. repentance. But how do we go on?

Sometimes when the spiritual crisis is so great, we just want to give up. We think, if that's what it means to follow God, if that's the cost, if that's the pain, I don't want anything to do with it.

The whole thing is hopeless. hopeless. And so, into this crisis, God, through Micah, speaks not just a message of judgment, but also a message of hope.

[6 : 41] And part of what these messages of hope are meant to do is to encourage our perseverance. They're written to people in crisis, in turmoil, encouraging us to hold on, to press on, even in the midst of the most difficult times.

And we see that this very thing is pointed to in verse 5. In verse 5 of our passage, we see perhaps the main application that Micah wants to impart to his listeners. He says to a people in the midst of spiritual crisis, in the midst of this upheaval, he says, look, all the people's walk, each in the name of its God.

But knowing what we know, even in the midst of this turmoil and difficulty, we will walk. Walk in the name of the Lord, our God, forever and ever. Why?

Why keep walking in the name of the Lord, even when politically, economically, and spiritually, everything is crumbling? Well, because as our passage says, there's hope.

Because God has a future plan to establish his kingdom, to establish his kingdom, and that plan will not fail. He has spoken, and so it shall be.

[8 : 02] So let's look at the message of hope in this passage and consider how it encourages us to persevere, to keep walking in the name of the Lord, even in difficult times.

First, Micah says, keep walking in the name of the Lord, because one day God will draw all nations to himself. Keep walking in the name of the Lord, church, because one day God will draw all nations to himself.

We see this in verses 1 and 2. First in verse 1, Micah says, 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.

Now, obviously, Micah's point here isn't ultimately about elevation, right? It's about exaltation. He's saying that the God of the Bible, the God of Israel, the Lord, will one day be exalted and seen as the great and glorious God that he is, and all other so-called gods will be exposed as empty idols.

And when God exalts himself in this unmistakable way, then, Micah goes on to say, 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, that we may walk in his paths.

[9 : 22] For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. So Micah sees here a future day when God's word streams forth from God's exalted presence out to all the nations, and then those nations come streaming in desiring more of God's word, desiring to be taught his ways, desiring to walk in his paths.

Now, in Micah's day, the only nations streaming to Jerusalem were nations who wanted nothing to do with Israel's God. The only nations flowing towards Jerusalem were flowing with violence and the machinations of war.

war. In fact, if you read the story of Assyria's invasion into Judah in the 8th century, the Assyrian armies mock God and say he's no better than all the other gods they've conquered.

And if you and I were standing on the wall of Jerusalem that day listening to the Assyrian generals mock the Lord, seeing the devastation they had wrought, seeing the proof that they had toppled

countries and nations a lot more mighty than Judah, would we too have thought, why not just give up?

Why not just join the winning party? Haven't our leaders been terrible to us anyway? I wonder if it doesn't feel the same today.

[10 : 53] It often feels like the world wants nothing to do with the true God. God seems irrelevant at best. But it won't always be that way.

Micah says, God will be seen as great. And the nations will stream in. And they will want to walk in his ways because his ways are good and they're full of life.

You know, sometimes people talk about not wanting to be on the wrong side of history, right? But Micah is saying, brothers and sisters, extend your timeline long enough.

And there's only one way to not be on the wrong side of history. And it's to walk in the ways of the Lord our God. Of course, Micah didn't see this promise fulfilled in his day.

And we don't necessarily see this promise completed in our day either, do we? The fullness of this promise awaits the day that we read about in Revelation 21 that Elizabeth read for us earlier in the service.

[12 : 01] When the heavenly Jerusalem descends, when God's presence comes to earth, and in the new heavens and new earth, a countless multitude from every nation streams in, bearing their gifts and worshiping God.

God's presence is yet to come. And we don't see it But even though the completion of this promise is yet to come, don't we see it beginning to take shape?

When Jesus the Messiah rose from the grave, and when 40 days later he ascended to the right hand of the Father, this promise began to be fulfilled. Christ ascended to the heavenly Zion, and from the Father's right hand he poured out his Spirit so that the law might go forth and be written on our hearts.

And from the day of Pentecost until today that word has gone forth and the nations have begun to flow to God the Father and to Jesus the Son.

Not in completion, but the streams have begun to flow. That's raw. Look at us. Look around.

[13 : 12] Count the nationalities and ethnicities in this room alone. And then consider that this morning across the entire world churches gather in the name of Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, to draw near to God with confidence and assurance in his name.

And what is it we're saying as we gather here and across New Haven and across Connecticut and across North America and across the entire globe? What is it all of these nations are saying, all of the international church is saying as we gather?

Are we not saying, 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?

So brothers and sisters, keep walking in the name of the Lord, even in difficult times because one day God is going to draw all nations to himself.

And that's the first part of Micah's message of hope. The second part is this, keep walking in the name of the Lord because one day God's justice will bring global peace and provision.

[14 : 30] Keep walking in the name of the Lord, even in difficult days because one day God's justice will bring global peace and provision. We see this in verses 3 and 4. Micah begins by speaking of God's righteousness, his perfect justice that will settle all the disputes between the nations.

Verse 3, he shall judge between many peoples and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away. Micah foresees a time when God will settle every claim in perfect, justice.

Imagine a world where every dispute, every conflict, every clashing of rights, every deep history of conflict and violence, imagine a world where all that has finally been settled.

And in the wake of such perfect justice, Micah says, there will be no more need for warfare 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 war anymore. If you're familiar with the book of Isaiah, who was a contemporary of Micah, Isaiah gives almost an identical prophecy in his book as well.

[15 : 58] Clearly, this is something that God wanted his people to see and to know. Imagine a world, imagine a world where all the money and materials and imagination that we human beings put into engines of war and destruction and security are turned instead to cultivation and not

devastation.

We take all that money and material and imagination and we put it into pursuits that are about building up and not tearing down, that are about agriculture and artistry and not war and suffering. Do we even let ourselves imagine such a future? And what results from the end, this ending of human war because of the perfect justice of God?

Verse 4, 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. The picture here isn't just that of prosperity, although it is that.

You know, the vine and the fig tree, those were images of abundance, of flourishing. But the image isn't just one of prosperity. The image is also one of contentment.

[17:25] Every man under his vine and under his fig tree no longer afraid that there isn't enough to go around, no longer coveting what someone else has, no longer plotting and scheming how to squeeze more profits and more produce out of less and less pay.

It's a picture of living without fear because God will provide. We live in a world where consumption and competition are the air that we breathe.

and so often even as Christians because we've been breathing that air for so long, we don't even realize it. I remember as a kid when I'd go to visit my friends' houses, I remember, I don't know why I noticed this and why I remember this, but I remember that each of my friends' houses had their own particular smell.

I don't know, maybe it was just the food that they would normally cook or the cleaning products that their parents would use or just the age and materials of the house, whatever, but I'd go into my friends' houses and be like, man, this house kind of smells different.

Am I the only weirdo who noticed that growing up? And I used to think, why do my friends' houses smell different, smell funny, and mine doesn't? And then you have that realization, ah, my house must smell too and I'm just used to it, right?

[18:56] I don't notice it. And you get a little self-conscious, you're like, oh man, what does my house smell like? You know, but the point is this, in this passage in Micah, the breeze of God's future is blowing into our present.

There's a wind from the presence in the house of God coming in to the present. And that future is not a future of fear and competition and it's not a future of greed and war but of peace and contentment and provision.

And we've grown up in the house of consumption and competition for so long that we don't realize that our house kind of smells until we catch the breeze of God's future.

And like a fresh wind full of summer flowers, it starts to open us up to new possibilities. You know, the early church felt this wind on their face.

Listen to Acts 4, 32 through 35. Now the number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own but they had everything in common.

[20:15] And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Do you see what Luke is describing here? As the people held more and more tightly to the resurrection of Jesus as they held more tightly to the great grace that they had and the hope that they had and the confidence that they had in the resurrection of Christ as they held tightly to that they found that they could suddenly start to loosen their grip on money and possessions.

They started to realize that they weren't in competition anymore. that they had everything they needed forever in the resurrection of Jesus and now they could be generous radically so.

Was this the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy? Well again like we saw in verses 1 and 2 there is a completion to Micah's vision that still awaits us in the future.

in the new heavens and new earth this will be true without any remainder. But even though the completion awaits the future the beginning is here.

[21:54] When the church practices this sort of radical generosity in the boldness and the confidence of the resurrection we start to catch the wind that blows through God's future and our house starts to smell a little differently.

And Micah's point is that this is where God is certainly taking the future. So don't give up. In the midst of difficult times and times of crisis times when the church feels and smells more like the kingdoms of this world rather than the kingdom of God don't throw in the towel. Keep walking in the name of the Lord our God. Keep pursuing peace. Jesus said blessed are the peacemakers. Keep pursuing peace because that is where the future is going. Keep pursuing contentment in the riches of the resurrection because that is where the future is going. And don't be afraid. Keep walking in the name of the Lord because one day God's justice will bring global peace and provision.

Well finally then we come to Micah's third and last point. Keep walking in the name of the Lord because one day God will restore the weak and afflicted.

[23 : 21] Keep walking in the name of the Lord even in difficult days because one day God will restore the weak and the afflicted. In verses 6-9 you can tell sort of the voice of the passage shifts doesn't it?

No longer is it Micah's voice sort of reporting what God will do but here we have the direct speech of God. God speaking through Micah in the first person.

Here's a message that God wants his people to hear loud and clear coming in his own voice coming from his own heart. The future that God will surely bring to pass. And this future that God will surely bring to pass won't just mean the gathering of the nations and it won't just mean global peace and provision.

All those things are surely wonderful and all those things are surely testimonies to God's greatness and glory. But as Micah's original listeners heard all that God was going to do with respect to the nations there must have been some who thought in their hearts that's what God's going to do with the world that's what God's going to do with the nations but what's coming what is God going to do with us?

What will God do with me? What's God's plan for those who have suffered the affliction of these difficult days? What's God's plan for those who have felt the betrayal of failed leaders of corrupt authorities of false preachers?

[24 : 48] What's God's plan for those who have felt the sting and conviction of their own sin too? Listen again to what God says in his mercy.

In that day declares the Lord I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away. To those whom I have afflicted and the lame I will make a remnant and those who were cast off I will make them a strong nation and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.

And you O tower of the flock hill of the daughter of Zion to you shall it come the former dominion shall come kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. God sees the affliction of his people whether their affliction comes because of the sins of others or whether their affliction comes because of their own sins or whether their affliction comes simply because we live in a fallen world.

God sees all of it. And he says to those who grieve and those who limp and those who are driven and feel far away God says I will gather you.

The day will come when I will wipe all tears away. The day will come when you will be so close to me that you will see my face and you won't need the light of a lamp.

[26 : 23] You won't even need the light of the sun because I'm going to be your light. And though you're weak now though it feels like you can barely walk one day you will reign with me forever and ever.

what is perhaps the greatest stumbling block in our walk with the Lord? What's the thing that often tempts us the most to want to give up and give in?

Is it not the heavy weight of our griefs and our shame? Our losses and our failures. We feel like we've suffered too much and we feel like we've sinned too much and so we just lose hope and walk away.

But God says I'm going to gather you. I'm going to wrap my arms around you like a shepherd lifting the wounded sheep and I'm going to make you strong.

It's you he says. It's the wounded ones. It's the humbled and it's the humiliated ones. He says you're going to be my remnant.

[27 : 50] That is he says what is this remnant? He says you're going to be the core you're going to be the seed you're going to be the center of the new thing that I do. you're going to be like the planting that gives birth to the new tree.

You see God's not looking for the strong and God's not looking for the polished and the put together. God's looking for the weak. God's coming for the humble. God's looking for those who know what it's like to grieve. Those are who will form the remnant the start of his renewed people. And that's exactly what God did. God exiled his people not in the 8th century but in the 6th century. Eventually Babylon came and demolished Jerusalem too and carried them off. But then in that humbled and humiliated people, that people full of shame and grief, he brought a remnant back. They weren't much. In fact, the temple that they rebuilt, some people remembered the old temple so they wept because it seemed so insignificant compared to the former one. [29 : 10] And they struggled for hundreds of years just to survive as the Persians and then the Greeks and then the Romans as empire after empire continued to oppress them and to shame them.

But then at last it came. It came. Just like verse 8 of Micah 4 had said, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. At long last the kingdom arrived. God's king was born. But this king wasn't what they expected. He wasn't strong and proud.

He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. He was humble and came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. You see, friends, this is how much God loves the weak and the humble and the broken. In order to rescue his weak people, he became weak. In order to redeem his humiliated people, he humbled himself.

[30 : 26] In order to save his broken people, he was broken. And the greatest mystery of all, in order to save his sinful people, Jesus Christ became sin on the cross.

Friend, are you weak and filled with sorrow today? Has the weight been so heavy that you've considered just giving up and just walking away? Before you do, look again upon the God who loves you.

And who walked every sorrow for you and even bore the weight of every sin so that in your sorrows you might never be alone. So that in your sorrows you might actually become more like him and so that your sorrows might one day be swallowed up in victory and he might wipe every tear from your eye.

Don't give up. Trust in him. And if you placed your faith in him, then keep walking in the name of Jesus our Lord.

He will carry you when you feel like you can't take another step. He will make you strong even when you feel weak. So this is Micah's message of perseverance and hope.

[31 : 48] Hope, not in ourselves, but in God. And hope in God's kingdom that will gather the nations and establish peace and even strengthen the weary. glory. And we can know that this kingdom has already begun.

It's already begun because the King, the Lord Jesus, has come. He came the first time to live, die, and rise again, and he will come a second time to judge and reign forever.

And on that day, when he comes again, all these promises will be fulfilled. Fulfilled not in part, but in whole. And all these echoes that we feel and that we experience now will come to their fullness and their consummation and their fruition.

And Micah tells us to set our eyes on that day. Keep that day in your sights. Keep that hope alive in your hearts. And keep walking in the name of the Lord our God, in the name of Jesus, in whom all God's promises are yes and amen.

Let's pray together. Father, we've considered the words that you spoke through Micah so long ago.

[33 : 03] Now we ask that by your spirit you would work this endurance and hope into our hearts through these words. Make the hope of the gospel, the hope of Christ Jesus crucified, risen and coming again, the hope of the new heavens and the new earth.

Make this hope real to our hearts, spirit. Make us certain in these promises because Jesus the son has died and has been raised.

And in hope, give us strength to walk, to persevere, knowing that you will surely complete, bring to full completion the good work that you've begun.

In Jesus' name, amen.