

# Wait for God

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, friends. Let's turn to God's Word. So, would you turn with me to Micah chapter 6? We are picking up our series in Micah this morning in verse 9.
- In verse 9 of Micah chapter 6, and we're going to look through Micah 7, verse 7. As we come to the Bible this morning, it's good to remember that the chapter and verse numbers in our kind of English translations were not part of the original text. Those were added later.
- So, sometimes the flow of thought in a biblical passage doesn't always line up exactly with our chapter and verse numbers. And that's the case with our passage today. So, we're going to pick up with the second half of chapter 6 and then go into the first half of chapter 7. That's page 731 in the Pew Bible if you want to follow along there. Kevin will have it on the screens as we read through it the first time, but it'd be good to have it open and just refer to it as we look at the text throughout our time together. So, Micah 6, 9 through 7, 7. Let me pray as we come to God's Word.
- Our Father in heaven, we draw near to you this morning with confidence because, as we have sung, we have a great high priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who stands, Father, at your right hand, interceding for us, making a way for us sinners to draw near to your throne. And Father, as we draw near in the name of Jesus through his work, we find that your throne is a throne of grace, a throne of forgiveness, a throne of mercy. So, we come to your throne of grace and we ask for your help now as we come to your Word. Would your Holy Spirit, who inspired this Word, be working in our hearts to bring conviction about these things, a deeper sense of these things in our hearts and our lives, so that we can love you and love one another more fully as you have created us to do. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, Micah 6, 9. The voice of the Lord cries to the city, and it is sound wisdom to fear your name. Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it. Can I forget any longer the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked and the scant measure that is accursed? Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? Your rich men are full of violence.
- Your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore, I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins.
- [ 2 : 5 1 ] You shall eat but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger within you. You shall put away but not preserve, and what you preserve I will give to the sword. You shall sow but not reap. You shall tread olives but not anoint yourselves with oil. You shall tread grapes but not drink wine. For you have kept the statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab, and you have walked in their councils.

That I may make you a desolation and your inhabitants a hissing, so you shall bear the scorn of my people. 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. But as for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Well, it's often been said that God's word is often like a mirror. God's word shows us not just what God is like, but like a mirror it holds up before us what we are really like. Shows us our true state. Now we live in a time when authenticity, you might say, we live in a time when authenticity, when knowing and kind of living out of what we perceive to be our true self, we live in a time when that's seen as one of, if not the highest virtue we could attain, right? And scripture comes to us and says that it can not just help us in that pursuit, but it can actually bring us to the place of deepest authenticity. It can actually show us who we really are. Because here in scripture, here is our creator holding up before us this mirror, showing us who we really are, showing us who we are really meant to be.

And the first part of the answer that the Bible gives about who we really are, as it holds this mirror up to us, is that we are created in God's own image. That God has created us in his own image.

[ 6 : 14 ] That we as human beings are not simply the product of time and matter and chance, but that we're purposefully made and we're actually wonderfully made to reflect God's very self.

So the Bible comes to us and says that there's almost no greater dignity that we could imagine. And we have it, that we're made in God's image.

But the Bible doesn't stop there. The Bible also explains what went wrong. Because after all, things aren't the way they're supposed to be. We're not the way we're supposed to be.

You know, we were created in God's image to love him and to love one another, and yet we don't love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And we don't love our neighbor as ourself. And this problem is what the Bible calls sin.

So if we're really going to understand ourselves according to the mirror of God's word, we have to hold these two things together. That we're created in God's image with incomparable beauty and worth, and we're also fallen and sinful. It's as if we're kind of bent in on ourselves.

[ 7 : 25 ] And we don't love the things that we're supposed to love, at least not rightly. And we don't desire the things that we're supposed to desire, at least not in the right order, in the right proportion. And of course, it's that second part of what the Bible shows us, the part about sin, that we don't really like all that much as humans.

And you know, for the past few hundred years, culturally and intellectually, that's the part that we've been trying to kind of write out of our human story. We've been trying to understand ourselves without that critical piece.

But you know, trying to understand ourselves, trying to understand humanity without a robust understanding of sin, it just doesn't work. You know, imagine going to see a counselor because you're trying to work through some anger issues.

You know, you always find yourself short-tempered or irritable. You're even losing your cool at times, you know, at work or with your kids. You just don't know where it's coming from. So you're like, man, I gotta go see a therapist. So you go to the counselor, and the counselor starts to ask you some questions.

And you know, it comes to light that you've kind of suffered all these terrible losses in your life. And you've just kind of ignored them. You haven't really squared up with them and acknowledged those losses and really grieved them.

[ 8 : 40 ] And then your counselor one day looks at you and says, you know, I think I might know a part of where your anger's coming from. I think you need to grieve these very real losses in your life.

But then what if in response, you just shut the whole conversation down? You're just like, no, no, no, that's not true. None of those things are real. None of those things matter. And you just sort of charge on, right? Well, obviously, you're never going to understand yourself or your anger unless you come to terms with those things, right?

But that's a bit like what we've been trying to do as humans when we try to understand our humanity without any reference to our fallen human nature. You know, we want to understand what makes us tick and why we do the things we do.

But we keep turning a blind eye to this very real, very glaring part of our own history of what makes us who we are, whether we like it or not. And so much of what God commissioned the Old Testament prophets to do was to confront people with this reality of their sin.

The gift of the prophets is that they won't let us keep living in self-delusion. They won't let us continue to hide behind our veils of inauthenticity.

[ 10 : 01 ] They call us out into the open. And that's what our passage here in Micah, chapter 6 and chapter 7, is doing. Micah's holding this mirror up to God's people.

And through Micah, God's showing his people their sin. And of course, we can look into this mirror and we can turn away. We can turn away like the person who refuses to listen to their counselor, refuses to deal with all the hard and painful stuff in their life.

We can just run away. But how foolish would that be? Micah says right at the start of our passage, the voice of the Lord cries to the city.

And then he says, it's sound wisdom to fear your name. It's sound wisdom to be in awe of God and to listen to what he says.

So we can choose. We can choose the path of foolishness or we can choose the path of wisdom. Why don't we look at what Micah has to say? Why don't we look at what Micah has to say to us about our sin?

[ 11 : 09 ] What would be wise for us to listen to and to understand? Well, our text actually has three parts. And in the first part, Micah shows us the gravity of our sin.

The gravity of our sin. This is verses 9 through 16 of chapter 16. This is the second half of chapter 16. Micah drills down into the gravity of our sin. And again, as we said, in this section, Micah holds up a mirror to his contemporaries.

And what shows up in that mirror as he holds it up? Well, in verses 10 through 12, kind of the first part of this section, we see that the problem that shows up is what we might call economic injustice.

Commercial dishonesty. Specifically, in the marketplace, the merchants and business owners, they're using false scales and false weights to cheat and to deceive and to get rich at other people's expense.

Imagine coming to the marketplace after a long week of work or maybe even a long season of work, of the harvest season. You've come with what you've grown and harvested on your farm that you and your family have spent weeks and months gathering and packing up and bringing into the city.

[ 12 : 22 ] And you put your produce on the scale and it reads 500 pounds. So the merchant pays you 500 pounds worth, you know, whatever that would be.

But what if the scale was rigged? You know, what if the scale was rigged to actually read 20% less than the actual weight? You know, the scale said 500 pounds, but it was supposed to read what?

600 pounds. But you only got paid for 500. And what if that just kept happening again and again? And all the merchant class are working together.

So you can't go to another stall and sell there instead because they're working the same system. And then you go and you complain to the authorities, but you realize they're getting a part of the profits.

So they just ignore your complaints and say, forget about it. That's just business as usual. Just take what you can get and be happy. But what does God say?

[ 13 : 22 ] Does he say forget about it? It's just business as usual? No. God says, can I forget? Can I forget these treasures of wickedness? Shall I acquit the man with wicked scales?

And the answer is no. It's impossible for God to forget or to acquit because of who God is, because of his holiness and God's utter truthfulness and integrity.

He cannot forget and he will not acquit. The way that they're cheating each other and stealing and lying from one another, all of this is a deep offense to the God who created them and who created humans in his image, remember.

These humans that are being cheated and scammed and oppressed, they bear God's image. It's an offense to God to treat them that way. And God says he will not allow it to continue forever.

Now, if you and I were to walk the streets of Jerusalem with Micah, would we see what God sees? Would we notice what God notices? Or would we be just like the upper class?

[ 14 : 44 ] Would we just shrug our shoulders and say, that's how business is done. What can you do? You see, the funny thing, the tragic thing for us as humans is that we have a tendency to not take sin very seriously.

There are all sorts, in whatever culture we find ourselves in, there's all sorts of just respectable sins, you know, things that just culturally are like, that's fine.

That's just the way it's done. Things that we just don't think are all that bad. But Micah here wants us to see the gravity of sin. It's not just skimming a little off the top.

It's not just how business is done. It's lies and violence against a person made in God's image. Now, maybe you aren't engaged in corrupt financial practices.

But are you and I willing to take a look at how we go about our work and how we approach our finances and ask, God, is there anything here I'm missing?

[ 16 : 05 ] You know, I read a statistic this week that something like 10% of the world's population owns 90% of the world's wealth. Is there something we're missing? Am I excusing or minimizing something that's actually dishonoring to you, God?

Sin is serious. And we have to treat it that way. And in verses 13 through 16, God shows the people that judgment's coming.

And the key word in verse 13 and verse 16 that kind of bookends this second half of our section here, verses 13 and 16, is the word desolation. You know, the people keep amassing wealth through their unjust practices, but God says the day is coming when you'll be desolate, when you'll be empty.

You shall eat and not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger within you. You shall put away, right? You'll save things, but it won't preserve. And what you try to preserve, I'm going to give to the sword.

And what you shall sow, but not reap. You'll tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil. You'll tread grapes, but not drink wine. It's just images of futility, of the created order not working the way it's supposed to work.

[ 17 : 27 ] Things breaking down. And for the Old Testament people of God, what this meant was exile. All the wealth, all the fields, all the pleasure that they had amassed, God said it will collapse in a day when Babylon comes and topples Jerusalem.

That's what verse 16 is getting at at the end. You might have wondered who Omri and Ahab are. Well, Omri and Ahab were wicked rulers from a generation earlier in Israel's northern kingdom.

The people in the north a generation ago followed in those king's footsteps, and God judged them, and they were sent into exile. And here Micah is saying to the people a generation later in the southern kingdom, you're just like them.

You might think you're better, but you're not. Your sins are just as serious, just as grave, and exile will come for you too.

How about us, friends? Do we think sin is that serious? Serious enough that God would be right to strip everything away from us because of it?

[ 18 : 43 ] Do we think sin is that grave, that serious, that God is right to judge it? You know, this is perhaps the greatest sign that we don't really think sin is all that serious, all that grave, is that we don't actually think God is within his rights to judge it.

We think God should just overlook it and just forget about it. But if sin really is an offense against God, the infinitely holy and infinitely loving God, the infinitely worthy God, and if sin is against God's image bearers, then we have to agree that the penalty for sin must be massive.

the just penalty for sinning against an infinitely worthy God is an infinitely weighty penalty. So where do we go?

Where do we go to find help? How do we get out from under that weight? Right? Well, that brings us to the second part of our passage. Chapter 7, verses 1 through 6.

After showing us the gravity of sin, Micah goes on in this next section to show us the extent of sin, the extent of it. In verse 1 of chapter 7, Micah begins with sort of a short allegory, with a short kind of illustration.

[ 20 : 03 ] He sort of pictures himself like a harvester going out into the fields looking for leftover fruit along the edges of the field. You see, in ancient Israel, the harvesters were commanded to sort of leave fruit along the edges of the field, to leave some of the crops and produce along the edges of the fields so that anyone afterwards could go and kind of harvest and gather something for themselves.

But when Micah goes out into the field, he finds nothing. It's all gone. There's not a single fig to be found. And then in verses 2 through 4, he gives the interpretation of this short allegory.

And what is the interpretation? What's the word picture all about? Verse 2, The godly have perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind.

In other words, Micah is looking for someone, for anyone, who might be able to help. Someone who's truly upright. Someone who's genuinely righteous.

And he finds no one. In other words, what Micah sees is that sin isn't just a serious problem. It's everybody's problem.

[ 21 : 15 ] Sin reaches into every human structure, every human relationship, every human heart. Micah goes on to paint a pretty bleak picture of what the powerful people are doing in his day, the princes and judges, the ones who are supposed to be protecting the people and upholding justice.

Turns out they're doing just the opposite. They're not protectors. Micah says they're hunters. They're weaving nets of lies and serving their own interests at the expense of others.

Micah says the best of them is like a briar. They're like a tangle of thorns. You know, the princes and the judges, they were people you were supposed to be able to run to and get help.

But Micah says, go ahead and run to them. You'd just be running into a bunch of thorns. But this corruption among the powerful has gone down into every level of society, Micah says.

Look at verses 5 and 6. What a sad and heart-wrenching picture. No one can be trusted. Not a neighbor, not a friend, not even your own spouse or children.

[ 22 : 25 ] It's just a picture of anarchy, of total breakdown. So what's Micah's point? Is he just like having a particularly bad day?

Did he like wake up on the wrong side of bed and he's just like, I'm done with humanity. They're all a bunch of, you know, no goods. Was he just exaggerating for effect, you know?

Well, I think Micah's point is that ultimately the stain of sin affects everyone. We can't just point to those people or to those people or to those people or to that group of people or to that particular group of people as the really bad ones, right?

No, the extent of sin is universal. We're all infected. Now, thanks to God's common grace, we are all not as bad as we could be.

But every part of us is bent by sin. The corruption of sin goes the whole way down.

[ 23 : 39 ] And that means we ultimately can't look at the end of the day to our princes and judges to rescue us. And that means we ultimately can't look to our friends and our neighbors to rescue us.

And that means we ultimately can't look to our spouses or our families to rescue us. And that means we ultimately can't look to our own selves to rescue us.

The more we try to get those relationships to be our Savior, the more disappointed and broken we will be. So where does that leave us?

Is that the end? Is that all the Bible has to say about who we are? Is that all the mirror shows us? That we're created in God's image and that we're fallen into sin? That we're beautiful but broken? Is that the final word?

Well, actually, there's a third part to the story. We humans are created in God's image and we humans have fallen into sin, to desperate, serious, universal, grave sin.

[ 24 : 53 ] But third, God has acted to redeem us and to repair what's been broken. But this doesn't come from us, this healing, this repair, this forgiveness.

it comes from God. In verse 7 of Micah chapter 7, the last sort of verse that we're looking at this morning, after recounting the kind of grim reality of sin for 14 verses, after abandoning any hope of finding rescue in sinful humanity, Micah says in verse 7, but as for me, I'll look to the Lord.

I'll wait for the God of my salvation and my God will hear me. And so, after showing us the gravity of sin and the extent of sin, Micah here is pointing us to the answer for sin.

To the answer. And the answer for sin doesn't come from any human source. How could it, right? If you and I both can't swim and we fall into the deep end of the pool, the last thing that we should do is cling to each other for rescue.

Right? That's not going to work. We need a rescue that comes from outside of us. So where do we look?

[ 26 : 23 ] You know, and this is the other tragedy of human existence. Not only do we just minimize and downplay and pretend and just sort of act like sin isn't really there, the other tragedy is that we look everywhere for rescue except for the one place where it can be found.

We'll look anywhere and everywhere for an answer except for the one place where God says, here's the answer. Here it is because I love you.

And where is it found? It's found in God himself. Micah knew enough about God's character and God's nature to know that his only hope in the midst of his just sin-sick world, his only hope was to look to God and to wait for the God of his salvation.

He knew enough about God to know that if he waited on that God, God would answer. After all, wasn't this the God who heard the cry of the people in Egypt when they were in slavery and who came and eventually set them free?

Wasn't this the God who led them through 40 years in the wilderness and then finally brought them into the promised land? Wasn't this the God who answered their prayers again and again when they were oppressed and subjected to pagan rulers and foreign gods?

[ 27 : 55 ] Wasn't this the God who did all this even though the people were sinful and rebellious and didn't deserve any of God's favor? Hadn't he shown himself to be gracious time and time again?

And so Micah looks to this God and says, I'll wait for you. I'll entrust myself into your hands, God. And then he ends with this just amazing prayer of simplicity and faith and confidence.

He says, my God will hear me. But friends, how much more can we say the same thing?

How much more ought we to have the same kind of turn and response as Micah knowing what we know from the New Testament? Micah could look back to the Exodus, back to the wilderness, back to the period of the judges and the kings.

But we can look back to the very heart of the gospel itself. And what is the heart of the gospel? What is the very good news at the center of the Bible?

[ 29 : 11 ] Well, we've been walking through that story really all morning if you think about it. that there's one God who's holy and good and this one God made all things and made you and me in his image to love him and to serve him and to know infinite delight in his presence with one another.

But rather than turning to God in obedience and in love, we've turned away from God in sin to be our own rulers and to live without God in the world that God has made.

And because God is holy and good, that turning away in rebellion deserves punishment.

Because God is so holy and good, he won't leave our rebellion unjudged. But in love, God makes a way to both exercise his just judgment and to forgive his fallen image bearers.

How does God do it? God becomes a human being. And in Jesus Christ, God lives a sinless human life.

[ 30 : 23 ] And then on the cross, he dies in the place of sinners taking the wrath that their sins deserve. And then three days later, Jesus Christ was raised from the dead to demonstrate that his sacrifice for sins was complete and perfect and that it paid for all of the sins for everyone who would turn and trust in him.

Jesus Christ is raised from the grave to give forgiveness of sins and new spiritual life to all who believe in him. And Jesus then ascends to the Father's right hand and he now intercedes for all who come to him and he promises to return one day to make all things new and to release creation from its bondage to decay and to establish the renewed heavens and earth free from sin and death once and for all.

Friends, if we really want to know ourselves, if you really want to know yourself, don't look to yourself. look to the Lord Jesus Christ because in him we see what's really true about us that we're forgiven sinners made in God's image but loved and the recipients of God's undeserved grace.

That's who you really are. And if you look at Jesus Christ, you see that he will one day release us from all brokenness and sin.

And if you know yourself in light of Jesus as a forgiven sinner loved by God, then you know what you can do? You can take stock of even your worst flaws and failures.

[ 32 : 13 ] You can really look at those in the mirror and not be crushed by it because you know that you're forgiven and loved.

And so you can look at those sins in the mirror and you can say, those don't really define me. And you can turn away from them. And you cannot be defined by those habits and patterns and desires.

And you can do the hard thing of asking for help to break out of destructive cycles of sin and selfishness. and you can be open and you can be transparent.

And you can let your life be found in the love of God for you in Christ. And you can walk in holiness and obedience before him.

Let's pray together. Oh, Father in heaven, that is what we long for, to be free from sin and to walk in the freedom of holiness, righteousness.

[ 33 : 33 ] But, Lord, we know that in order to get there, we sometimes have to take a hard look in the mirror. Father, perhaps your spirit's been doing that this morning in our midst.

Perhaps in our hearts you've been putting your finger on sins that need to be confessed and turned away from. Perhaps this morning your spirit's been working in the hearts of those who don't know you and who've been trying to live under their own righteousness and their own steam and their own identity O Lord, would your spirit come and shine his light into those places of our hearts and then, spirit, would you turn our eyes to Christ and help us to see the forgiveness of our sins.

O Lord, grant saving faith to those who are far from you this morning. And Lord, by your Holy Spirit in us, would we put sin to death and walk in the newness of life that you have given us.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.