

Sermon - Genesis 12:1-3, Joshua 24:14-28 Micah Selected July 5, 2009

Micah 2:1-4, 3:1-2, 9-12, 4:1-5 5:2-5 6:1-4, 6-8

Micah – Taking the Measure of the Moment in the US of A

Please pray with me.... O God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid, be hear to us in this hour. Find us out - our secret sorrows, the weaknesses that plague us, our doubts that disturb our peace, our silent but soaring hopes. And speak a word of winning power to us in this hour... may the words of my mouth, and the thoughts of these your faithful and loving people, be acceptable in your sight and your good word to us this day. Amen.

His book is short – just seven chapters – along way from Isaiah who lived about the same time and whose prophecy covers 66 chapters. Micah is called a minor prophet, yet some of his words are among the most quoted from the Bible. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and nation shall not lift up sword against nation . And at Christmas we remember his words - O Bethlehem, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth one who is to rule Israel - he shall feed his flock like a shepherd.

He had a word of promise for God's people, but also a word of dire warning of how a nation could fall apart - and - this minor prophet got it right on both counts - the nation lost is moral compass and collapsed, and God sent God's only son to save God's people.

Micah had some very harsh things to say about his society and the way people were living – and his words are worth listening to – they sound so right on for our day. And Micah saw a way for people to walk out of troubled even terrible times with hope. He called people to honor God and to find peace by doing three things -

To do justice; to love kindness; to walk humbly with God.

And in the wonder of God's gift to us of God's great love in Jesus Christ, God gave us an example of how this way of living works. Jesus Christ set apart this sacrament for us to do, and by doing it – we are able to remember what Micah taught and what is the best way to live the best kind of live we can.

Micah said – this is what God wants.... To do justice – and here we practice justice. All are welcome here. All are equal. All who confess their sins and their need for a savior are welcome. God is just.

And Micah said, love kindness. Here we practice kindness – to serve others, we share symbols of what makes life possible, food and drink.

And Micah said, walk humbly with God.... And we come here because we know our need for God's forgiving and life giving grace. And we serve others. Three things Micah called God's people to do – to be faithfully God's people, and we practice them here ..

Still – Micah needed to call people to live in these ways because he saw how little justice or kindness or humility existed in his society. He had words of judgment. He took the measure of his society, and found his people were living far from God and God's ways. He pointed out the disaster that would happen if his people did not change their ways.

He counted his people's sins out loud – before he offered them their hope - Here - I will try to sum it up briefly, because on this bright and beautiful 4th of July weekend, while we need to hear the truth, we need most to hear God's word of counsel and hope for how we can get through and out of the mess we are in.

But I've got to tell you, as hopeful as I am because I know God loves me, and God is good – I do not see a lot of hope for our society right now. I don't sense many people even wanting to really get better, to be willing to seek God's will and do it. I see that Micah's hard words are pretty true for our time...

People coveted other people's property – rich seizing from the poor. They wanted fields and seized them, houses and took them.... Inheritances and seized them. He said – you hate the good and do evil. You give judgement for a bribe - The powerful dictate what they desire, they pervert justice.

And all of that sounds all too true for our day. 3,000 years ago Micah saw into the heart of the human person.

And George Gallup confirmed for our day what Micah saw in his day. In a poll Gallup found that while Church attendance was up a little bit in these tough times, Morality is losing influence. Religion is not affecting people's lives - People don't care about right or wrong – just what's right for themselves.

And Chuck Colson asks.... Even if less people believe in God, why, if more than 80% say they do, and there are 50 million born again Christians in America... why isn't America more good?

And the great french historian - de Toqueville – probably got it right when he said America is great because America is religious, and if America ceases to be religious she will cease to be good.

Is Gallup right – are basic Christian moral values losing ground? Who even knows the 10 commandments – or - really tries to obey them. Lying is at the heart of advertizing, and coveting is a key for a society of consumption. And adultery is a way of life. We have no day

of rest - not for all of us, or any of us. And honoring parents is pretty hard when over half of all kids spend at least some time in a single parent situation.

The city of Detroit has been charged with having a culture of corruption. And the fruit in the suburbs hasn't fallen far from the tree. And murder is a common thing – 7 gunned down at a school bus stop last week. A former mayor and city council president, - both felons.

And Marriage means what ? What ever anyone wants it to mean. And a clergy colleague says - well we have to change the rules because that is what people want.

And Micah said in his day, and says to our day - No. He says - What does the Lord require?

The trouble we are in is clear. We know it. But on this 4th. Of July weekend when we celebrate the declaration of Independence, it would be good to remember that those brave men and women who fought for our freedom based their struggle for Independence first of all on their dependence upon God.

And there's the ground of our hope - for the answer to the troubles of our day is as Micah saw it - and we have seen it, too. Very simple, very clear. Three things. Three things that can send a light beam of hope down the futuring way. Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly.

Is there justice in bailing out banks but forcing devastating job loses in the auto and related industries, and massive foreclosures? Is there kindness in a society, our society, with the largest % of its population in jail than any other first world country, with the highest rates of suicide, and divorce and domestic violence and drug use and alcoholism and single parent homes. Is there humility before God? When the % of people who do not believe in God oes up each year?

God blessed America. But is America doing in return for that blessing?

Micah, Micah.... Was there any hope in your day - is there any hope in our day? Yes, Yes, Yes. What does God require of you?

And the wonder is how simple it is to turn to the right, and the good and the true. And how the faithful few can have a huge impact. Habitat for Humanity was the vision of one rich man who became troubled by what his wealth led him to do, at how he was being consumed by his consumerism. And he heard God's word and sought to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with his God. He took seriously God's call in Christ - when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or naked or in prison, or a stranger -and did not help you? And he built a movement that's made a difference in people's lives.

And when our Government follows a policy that favors the rich and forecloses on millions of people, Habitat keeps on building homes for the homeless, and Grace Centers of Hope in Pontiac does too.

Just three simple steps to renewed righteousness - to shining the light of hope into the darkness of these days...

And – symbolically – we will take those steps this morning. As you come forward for communion. Do justice – yes – all, all are welcome at this table... who confess Jesus Christ as Lord... God is gracious and just.

Love kindness - Yes - we practice sharing here , and then out there...

Walk humbly with your God - serve others here.... And in your giving and your Living - day by day you show you are willing to be servants of the kingdom.

Micah measured the moment in his nation – and he found it frightening. But he knew the formula for reform and renewal and resurgence And we know it even better – because we have seen it in Christ,

And – in very simple ways we practice it here over and over and over again. And it is a certain truth - only what you practice can you get better at doing. And that's our prayer - taking the measure of our day - that we may – and here is the key - that we may - by our sharing of our anger and our disgust with every immoral ,unfaithful, unjust, unkind and prideful thing we see, by our protest, by speaking out, we may move things for the good. We may loose God's power for others to see.

And - by our practicing here and out there – over and over and over again, justice, kindness and humility....

We can impress on those who know us, and beyond, the wonder of the goodness in God's way for us to live in Christ.

Come – practice again this morning - the way that Micah saw for God's people to change the moral measure of their day, and Jesus calls to do it in our day. Amen.

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