

Micah 5:1-5; 7; Who is Like the LORD? I. The Coming Destruction II. The Promise of a Future III. The Calling of the Remnant

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what comes after destruction? A common movie genre is called post-apocalyptic. There is a fascination with this today- as many like to think about what would happen after the end of the world- or what life would be like after a nuclear war or some worldwide catastrophe. But what about Israel? What would this nation be like after the coming destruction? Today we come to the prophet- Micah- and his name means- who is like the LORD- that where our sermon title comes from. Who is like God- and who does the works that He has performed? Who can not only bring destruction like this- but who can bring life after this destruction- who can restore after the walls have been broken down? Micah came from the southern tribes- and he spoke around the same time as the prophet Isaiah. The dye has been cast- and the pieces are moving into place. We are but a few short years away from the advance of the Assyrian army and the destruction after the Babylonians. But what would become of God's people? What would happen to the people of Israel? In our series we have been looking at some common themes of these Minor Prophets. Most of them speak of coming judgement due to the rebellion, rejection and sin evident in nation of Israel. But Micah is unique in his promise of hope and picture of the future for God's people. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the astounding mercy of God in His restoration of God's people in Micah. Last week we saw the mercy and compassion of the LORD seen in His dealing with Jonah and the Ninevites. This time we see God's mercy and compassion in His restoration of the Israelites.

I. The Coming Destruction

In our first point, we find the similar theme of a coming destruction. The LORD is coming- the Day of the LORD is at hand- but it will not be a day of joy but rather a day of destruction. Micah 1 opens with an awe-inspiring picture of coming destruction. The picture that is given has many similarities with the descending of God on Mt. Sinai as recorded in Ex. 19. The mountain was covered in smoke and the earth shook- as 1:3 says- the LORD is coming out of His place and the mountains will melt and the valleys split open. When the LORD comes down- when He visits the earth- the people ought to take notice. But this time, the LORD is not coming to give His

people the Law as He did in Ex. 20- this time He is going to judge His people- He is going to bring them into account. Have they been keeping my commands- have they been following my Law? Are they living like my people? And the short answer is no! Instead they have externalized the Law and turned the heart of the Law into vain repetition. Now who is it that has rebelled- who forgotten the ways of the LORD and strayed into sin? It is the people of the covenant- God's chosen nation. Both the North and the South tribes- as the end of ch. 1 goes on to list various cities found in both area. Even the daughters of Zion. But what is unique to Micah is the focus on the leaders of the people. The other Minor Prophets have already identified the pride, rebellion and transgression of the people. Micah focusses on two main groups- the leaders and the prophets. The leaders are identified in our reading from ch. 7:3- the princes and the judges ask for bribe. Even the greatest of the men utter evil desires in their hearts. So the leaders and the judges have polluted justice- they have taken righteousness and turned it into iniquity. The guilty are being let off free while the innocent are not being defended. There is no justice in the land! We need not look any further than our own city to see an example of this- the leaders defend the actions of the rioters and looters- those who are supposed to be imprisoned are set free- while those who want to gather for church are fined and even put in prison. We hear the chant- no justice, no peace! But justice is supposed to bring and keep the peace! Or as 3:9 says- the rulers detested justice and made crooked all that was straight. So there is nothing new under the sun. Added to this, the second group that Micah condemns is that of the false prophets. Let's look at 2:11- if someone would be willing to offer up lies- promising prosperity and peace- that is the kind of prophet that you would embrace. The people were gathering preaching who would scratch their itching ears- telling them what they want to hear- saying peace and prosperity when the LORD had not sent these men- and their message was contrary to the truth. These were prophets for hire- kind of like our prosperity gospel preachers of today. Making promises of peace, fortune and blessings while refusing to speak of sin, repentance and suffering. Again in 3:11- your prophets practice divination for money. What was going on during the time of Micah is illustrated by what we read in I Kings 21- where Jezebel corrupted justice so that Ahab could steal Naboth's vineyard. And in I Kings 22- Ahab is surrounded by false prophets that prophesy peace and victory- but they had a message of

their own making as they had not been sent from the LORD. So because of this, Micah tells of a coming destruction at the hands of Assyria and Babylon- when Israel would be overrun with none to help. There was a lack of justice in Israel- instead violence and oppression reigned. So the LORD would return this violence on their own head by using the scourge of a foreign nation.

II. The Promise of a Future

But that is not the end of Micah's prophecy- there is a unique promise that Micah brings from the LORD concerning a future and blessings which would come after the destruction! You see, the destruction by Assyria and Babylon is not the end of the story- we could say that there is a post-apocalyptic promise for a return, renewal and blessings! The message of coming destruction because of sin is a theme shared by most of the prophets- but Micah has a unique picture in the restoration that will follow. In fact, if you consider the outline and structure of this book, after each section of doom and warning there is a promise of peace and a return of blessings. We find this at the end of ch. 2- in chapters 4-5 and at the end of ch. 7. First, at the end of ch. 2 we find a promised time of gathering. 2:12- I will assemble all of you- I will gather the remnant. Like a flock gathered in its fold- the LORD will bring back and gather His people together. Here, Micah is speaking of a time when a remnant- a chosen remainder will return from captivity to be re-established and blessed within the land. We can read about this in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah- as 2 successive waves of captives were brought back to the promised land after the decree of Cyrus. But this returning of a chosen remnant is but a dim picture of what our God is currently doing! He is gathering a chosen remnant from the whole world! As Rom. 11:5 says- there is a remnant, chosen by grace! But this theme of the LORD gathering His people like a shepherd gathers His flock carries over into the next section as well. In fact, in there is a direct connection between shepherd and kins in the Hebrew mindset. Many of the Israelite leaders were shepherds before they ruled. And the image of God ruling over them- like a shepherd- is a most comforting truth as most of our children here know from Psalm 23- the LORD being my shepherd. Ch. 2 ends with the LORD being at the head- God himself will lead His people. In the second section in ch. 4-5 we find a similar thrust. But here we have the

added comfort of not only a remnant returning- we have a city being rebuilt! Although the city of Jerusalem had been burned- Micah is telling of a time when a New Jerusalem would be built! Mount Zion which was humiliated in defeat will be raised to greater heights! This great mountain of the LORD brings to mind what Danial saw- where the mountain of God's kingdom would grow until it covered the entire world. There will be a great ingathering of people- many who will be taught the Word of the LORD as 4:2 says. They will desire to be led in the way of truth- and the LORD will judge them with equity. They will have peace and prosperity- each sitting under his own vine and fig tree as 4:4 says. (5:1-5) And this people will be ruled by God's chosen king- as we read of this shepherd again in 5:4- the king will shepherd God's flock in the strength of the LORD. He will dwell secure- for He is great- and He shall be their peace! Now who is this shepherd king- who will be the prince of peace- who rules with might and shall bring security for God's people? Well, it may help to know where this king will be born! As 5:2 reveals- He will be born in Bethlehem- the city of David in the tribe of Judah. Micah adds just a little more to the picture- we see Him just a little more as we read this prophet! Who is this shepherd king sent from God who will gather the lost, bringing peace and eternal comfort- whose reign will extend and be established like a mountain? He is the King of Kings, the Prince of Peace, the wonderful counselor- and His name is Jesus born in the town of Bethlehem! A ruler who is the ancient of days! You see, God has a plan for a great restoration- for sweet salvation- because He will establish His Kingdom- and this Kingdom will have no end! The good news we find in Micah is that the great shepherd ruler will come- and He will govern His people with equity- He will rule with justice and He will be the truth- the perfect prophet. What the Israelites were experiencing- wicked rulers and false teachers- would be replace by a righteous ruler and the perfect and final prophet- Jesus Christ! Our book ends in ch. 7:18 by identify how our God is unique. Although He may bring a nation down because of her rebellion, He is always quick to forgive and ready to pardon. He is slow to anger and abounding in love. There is even the promise of forgiveness in 7:19- casting all those sins into the depth of the sea. Our God shows faithfulness and love- He keeps His covenant- and by the blood of Jesus we find forgiveness and grace- even entrance into His blessed Kingdom! Truly- there is no one like our God! What a privilege we have every week to hear those great words of assurance and pardon! Who

else would forgive, pardon and rescue as He does? I would love to spend more time pondering this great grace- these blessing that Christ has secured for us- but we have one more point to get to. But let us not fail to marvel at the great grace and forgiveness that God has shown to us through the great King- Jesus Christ our Lord!

III. The Calling of the Remnant

In our final point, we find the calling of this remnant. As noted in our first point, the main issue that Micah confronts is a lack of justice and truth as evidence by Israel's leaders and false prophets. This led to a hypocritical religion in Israel- people performed their vain and empty rituals while remaining unmoved in their hearts. It is insightful to remember that this very prophecy was known- remembered by the religious rulers in Mt. 2. Remember children, when the wise men came to Jerusalem asking about the King of the Jews- the religious leaders remembered this very prophecy- they remembered Micah 5:2- He will be born in Bethlehem- but this did not move their hearts to humility and praise- they did not seek the Christ child but rather chose to plot against Him! You see- knowing the Bible does not always lead to obedience. Your heart has to be changed! But for God's people- I mean those who are truly of Israel- the redeemed remnant- there is a calling to holy living. To say this another way- those who have been shepherded by God- who are under the Kingship of Jesus- who have their sins forgiven and are pardoned from their iniquity- these are called to live a certain way. The Holy Spirit changes the hearts of God's people- back then and still today- so that we know, understand and even live in accordance with His commands. We become obedient. Now the summary of this obedience comes to us in 6:8. What does the LORD require of His people- those who belong to Him? These are to do justice, love kindness or mercy- and to walk humbly with their God. So this is the path of blessings- this is what God calls good and holy living. As a fruit of our identity- being a holy, chosen remnant- forgiven by His grace and gathered from the nations to be kingdom of priests- this is how we are now called to live. To do justice- to live with a proper understanding of right and wrong. Live in a fit manner. God's Law guides us to see sin- to repent of that sin- and to seek to live in obedience before others in this world. We treat fellow man as

we ought. Secondly, we are to love mercy or kindness. This is what we call compassion-putting ourselves in the position of others. When others fail us we are quick to forgive! To have pity on others- which leads to generosity. Because we have been pardoned- we are willing to pardon others! Think of others before ourselves- considering their needs. And finally, we are to walk humbly with our God. Literally, this means that we are to walk in accordance with the way of God or to be mindful of how we walk with God and in God's presence. To be lowly- to know that our own way is not right- that God's way is right and good. To serve Him and follow His way first! Really, what Micah is doing is that he is giving us the summary of the Law in reverse. We are love our neighbor as ourselves- doing to others as we would have them do to us; and we are to love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the summary of the Law- and this is what God wants- even requires of His people. We seek to live a God honoring and God pleasing life as we worship and serve Him alone- and seek to be a blessing and benefit to those God has placed in our lives. We obey from the heart- and not just on the outside! We are not content with vain religion- but with true piety! To be generous, grace filled and loyal to our neighbor- and humble, obedient and respectful towards our God. Jesus uses very similar words in Mt. 23:23. In rebuking the Pharisees, the true heart of piety is revealed! The weightier matters of the Law are justice, mercy and faithfulness! It is always a temptation to externalize obedience. But may we truly embrace the Spirit of the Law- not neglecting the weightier matters of the Law- by being just, merciful and humble in our daily walk.

To conclude, although Micah share similar themes with other prophets, we see that the uniqueness of this book is found in the revelation of God's mercy, pardon and forgiveness! We catch a beautiful picture of Jesus as God's appointed ruler who will shepherd and save His people- gathering God's chosen remnant! Jesus Christ reveals the astounding mercy of God in His restoration of God's people in Micah. So may our hearts rejoice in this God who is like no others- and may we dedicate ourselves to living in a way that is pleasing before Him- a way of justice, mercy and humility!