



## Authentic Living – Major Themes from the Minor Prophets What God Really Wants (Micah)

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Last week I read about a man who went to a restaurant that was featuring a wonderful steak and salad bar, as they were having their dinner a server came to replenish the salad bar. As she walked past the next table carrying a 5 gallon bucket of 1000 Island salad dressing she caught her heel on the carpet and like on TV in slow motion, they watched as the salad dressing flew through the air and totally covered a man sitting near her. He had salad dressing from the top of his head to the bottom of his shoes. It was dripping off his forehead, off his chin and was on the lapel of his suit all over his tie his pants and even running into his shoes. He was a mess, the whole place went silent. Then the guy went ballistic, he started calling the poor girl every name in the book. He said ‘I can’t believe how stupid you are. Look at this, this is the first time I have worn this suit. It cost be \$450 and you have completely ruined it’. The girl, as she began trying to wipe the dressing off his suit was apologizing when he started in on her again. He said ‘Get away from me; you have caused enough damage already’. Then his wife chimed in, it was a \$450 suit, blah blah blah’. Then as everyone watched he demanded to see the manager. As the manager came out from the back of the restaurant, he made the mistake of asking ‘Is there a problem?’ The guy replied “Is there a problem, and away he went talking about his brand new \$450.00 suit. When the manager said, ‘We’ll gladly clean your suit for you’. The man said that wasn’t good enough, he wanted cash right now for a brand new suit, shirt, tie and some compensation for his trouble. I imagine when he left the restaurant that he had a check in his pocket. It seems only fair, that they cut him a check especially after all he had gone through, doesn’t it?

Now here’s what is interesting about this story, it happened on a Sunday afternoon. Now why would a guy, be wearing a suit at Sunday lunch? Maybe he had just come from church, where he had heard a great sermon on some topic like loving your neighbor. Or turning the other cheek or ‘living like a believer because his world needs to see that happening’. Maybe you know this, but people in the food service industry often love to work any shift except Sunday lunch because that is when the Christians come. They are the folks who have the highest expectations of the servers and leave the smallest tips. This morning we will be looking at the book of Micah, in our series of Authentic Living which places us in the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. Micah is a book that answers a simple question; “I wonder what God really wants from us?” Micah was from a small farming town called Moresheth which was about 25 miles south of Jerusalem. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Hosea. When Micah came along, it is very possible that he could remember going into Jerusalem to hear the great Isaiah preach at the temple. The time was round 740 BC that means that the Assyrians (the dominant world power of the day) were forcing Israel and Judah to pay huge taxes. While we know that within 20 years Assyria will obliterate Israel and carry them away as captives. It was a time of unprecedented wealth and prosperity, when Obadiah, Hosea and Amos preached about turning back to God, the people had not listened. Maybe it was because God hadn’t brought any catastrophe their way, or because they were still good church going people, and financially they were doing well, so they felt that things must be going well between them and God.

It was in this context that Micah traveled from the farm to Jerusalem with a message for the folks in Jerusalem. One other thing is very important as we look at this book. When you read it you will find numerous prophecies which we know come true in the future with precise accuracy. *Micah 4:10* says “What you lost in Jerusalem (your deep walk with God) will be found in Babylon. God will give you a new life again; He will redeem you from your enemies”. What happened was in 585 BC (150 years later) Babylon (not even a world power when this was written) sacked Jerusalem and carried them away as captives. It was during that time of captivity they found their faith again and under Nehemiah (420 BC) they journeyed back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and walk with God as a nation). I tell you this because when you see the accuracy of Micah’s prophecies, we know that what he said was passed on truth from God. Knowing that, means we had better listen closely for what he has to say to us, for these are God’s words.

Micah begins with almost a graphic comic picture of God walking toward them. *Micah 1:3-5* He strides across the mountains causing the mountains to sink below his weight for He is on a mission. That mission vs. 5 says it is to do business with Israel and Judah because they are sinning. Despite the fact that the preachers *Micah 2:6* don’t want Micah to talk like this. He delivers a message that they are causing the poor to get poorer and leaving women and children vulnerable to abuse *Micah 2:8-11*. Meanwhile the preachers *Micah 3:5-7* are saying, Micah we don’t want you messing with our religious system because it is working well for us. Micah responds “I’m filled with God’s power, filled with God’s Spirit of justice and strength ready to confront Jacob’s (Israel’s) crime. What is the accusation?” *Micah 3:9-12* They have distorted justice, caring more for getting ahead themselves than caring for those who may be hurt in the process or discarded as having no value. All the while they have felt that because they attend church and do some religious things, that God is ok with how they are living their lives. In other words they had been so programmed for nominal Christianity that they had stopped wrestling with the truth of what it meant to be a follower of God.

I heard Matt Chandler say the other day, “we have been told that all it takes to become a follower of Christ is to pray a prayer and then we can live life as we want to.” That is not what it means to be a follower of Christ; He is to be the Lord of our lives. That means that what Jesus says determines how we will live our lives. That means it is impossible to live the Christian life without doing what he says. That means if we don’t do what he says, we need to ask if we are really a Christian. With that in mind, turn to *Micah 6:1-5* God says I have had it, I have treated you so good, given you so much, been there when you needed me and I am sick of the kind of religious faith you are living. *Micah 6:6* they finally figure out what they are doing and they understand that somehow they aren’t living as God would want them to live. So they ask a simple question, “What does God really want from me?” You have all heard about the book “The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman” (we have done some of our mission formatting around this idea) it contains the idea that we all express and receive love in different ways. The important thing is that you express your love in a way your spouse really appreciates. For example, if your wife’s love language is that she loves gifts and yet what we want to do is make sure that she is always secure, so you don’t spend a penny on her and never give her flowers or anything, winters could get very long and cold for you. However, when you understand that when you give her that card or flowers or that thing she has been ‘hinting at’ by leaving magazines open with that item circled, life could get more exciting for you.

With that in mind look at *Micah 6:6-7* it is as if a light comes on with Micah's audience and they realize that God actually wanted the exact opposite of what I have just described above. They realize that while they thought what God wanted them to bring Him all kinds of stuff, like sacrificing young calves (the best sacrifice of the day) and bringing rivers of temple olive oil, that what God really wanted was very different. *Micah vs. 8* Now remember because we know Micah's words are right from God, and then these are words by which we need to live.

**Obadiah** (840 – 830)

(Worshipper of YHVH)

Day of the Lord

Edom's Destruction

Israel's restoration against Edom

Edom had continual violence toward Jacob. Edom cheered when Judah taken captive.

**Joel** (830 - 750)

(YHVH is God)

Day of the Lord

Israel

(Ten Tribes of Israel) Adultery, drunkenness, idolatry, licentiousness

**Jonah** (780 - 740)

(Turtle Dove) Sign of Commitment

Type of Jesus Christ

Mercy to Repentant

Nineveh, with implications to all people

Cruelty of Assyrians

**Hosea** (765 – 725)

(Salvation) Salvation

Israel

(Ten Tribes of Israel) Adultery, drunkenness, idolatry, licentiousness

**Amos** (760)

(Burden Bearer) Day of the Lord

The Eternal will roar.

Israel, Judah, Benjamin and all nations

Oppression of poor

Sexual Immorality

Wanton Luxury

Corrupt law and men

**Micah** (740 – 700)

(Who is like YHVH?)

The Eternal is just to Judge Samaria, Jerusalem, and all Nations

## **I. To Act Justly**

Don't miss that all of these phrases come in couplets. For it is not enough to be a person who believes that Justice is important. For it to really make a difference, that passion for justice must be acted upon and acted out. Remember the context has parallels to what happens in downtown Calgary today. For often when push comes to shove, it is how well we are 'layered' up instead of what is just and truthful, it is who you know in city hall not just how just your cause is, it is how well you are connected to the places of power rather than how great your need or how important is your cause. That is why God calls us at times to stand against the natural flow of our city and stand up for what is right. For what God wanted to know was who was sticking up for the poor, the unborn and those who are in need? Our call is to do the right thing and to make sure it is being done in our city. This morning to help us process what it means to live God's way I have asked Myron Krause who is the Executive Director at the Mustard Seed here in Calgary to help us grasp what it really means to live as Christ followers in these areas. Myron and Polly his wife served in Edmonton at the Mustard Seed Church for \_\_\_ years and together they have lived out what these verses ask. They have seen what happens when God causes his people to live His way.

## **II. To Love Mercy**

The term mercy is used over 300 times in the bible. The Newsboys described mercy on a personal basis as 'when you don't get what you deserve, it is a real good thing, that's mercy'. The idea is that because we have such a merciful God who shows mercy, we in turn need to show mercy to those around us. What is mercy? It is showing unexpected Kindness, but notice that God says that we are to love mercy, not just show it. It needs to be something that we love to do, that flows easily out of our hearts. That we not only love to see acts of kindness but that we love to be involved in acts of kindness. Throughout the scripture it talks about doing those acts of kindness to those we love, to our neighbors and to the poor. When it comes to the poor, *1 Samuel 2:8* "God raises the poor from the dust", *Job 34:28* "God hears the cry of the needy", *Psalms 140:12* "God secures justice for the poor", *Luke 6:20* Jesus said "I came to preach good news to the poor". When John the Baptist asked if Jesus was the Messiah *Luke 7:20, 21* Jesus responded "go and tell John what you saw, the blind given sight, the crippled walking and good news is preached to the poor". Why would that show that he was the Messiah? It was that God's heart has continually and passionately hurt for the poor. It has always been to look for those who need a helping hand and in mercy, lovingly make a difference in their lives. For God cares for the poor, and as we see in Micah, God condemns those who neglect the poor. In this passage what is being said here is that it is impossible to love God without having his heart for the poor bleed into our heart. That if we are truly Christ followers that it should be impossible to flip the channel and ignore the cry of those in need and continue to live like they don't exist.

## **III. To Walk Humbly**

To walk humbly with God means to live an authentic life, no masks, and in a world that tries to always lift up the winners and embarrass the losers that we are called to walk with a proper view of ourselves. We are to continue living our lives and trust God, and not rely on our own strength. I find it interesting that we are told to walk humbly with God. Walking implies

that we need to be going in the same direction as God that we are going at the same pace as Him, that his heart issues have become our heart issues.

Maybe this prayer may put things in perspective for us. “Dear Lord, so far today I’m doing alright. I’ve not gossiped, lost my temper, and been greedy, grumpy, nasty, or self-indulgent. I’ve not whined, cursed, or eaten any chocolate. However, I am about to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help now”. Walking humbly means understanding who we are and how great the task is that God has called us to and realizing that if we are going to make it through the day, living as Christ would have us live. We will need a lot of help.

#### **IV. To Live with Hope**

As Micah tells me how to bless God and live christianly I find it both exciting and also overwhelming, so did the people to whom he was preaching to. When I catch again that I am called to act justly and love Mercy, that means rethink my response to the poor and to live humbly in a world that doesn’t make it that easy. Did you notice that in every one of the Minor Prophets that in the midst of their calls to change, there is always a word of hope for us? Turn back to *Micah 5:2, 4, 5* did you realize that this Christmas promise happened in the midst of God calling people back to a deeper walk with God. In the middle of that He say’s “don’t forget, the Messiah is coming, God is coming to live among you in that small town called Bethlehem will be born a leader. Who came from before time began, will be a shepherd who will rule by God’s strength and bring peace to the whole earth. So have hope, for God has great things in your future as you trust him.”

If you want to know what God wants from you it is so simple, yet at the same time the kind of challenge that will take wisdom to live out, it is worth giving your life to Act Justly, To Love Mercy and To Live Humbly.