

We've all seen, and most have experienced, injustice in our lives. It's amazing how it sticks with you—even years later. It could have been a small issue as a child when someone took a toy that you legitimately had *first*. But as you grew up, many of you witnessed and experienced far greater injustices.

In our country, recently, some have experienced injustices that make us wonder, "What is the world is happening?" Understandably, people are clamoring for justice. But their greatest fear is that it won't come. **Our government** has gone sideways in so many ways it makes citizens wonder if our elected officials are truly interested in serving the people or merely serving themselves. **Turn on any** news program and you will be pummeled with graphic depictions of people being mistreated around the world and down the street. People are being mugged, raped, and murdered. Children are being kidnapped and sold into slavery. Citizens are being denied their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness because they are the wrong color, speak the wrong language, are too old, too young, too weak or too poor. One justice organization¹ estimates that, worldwide, there are *still* more than 40 million people in some form of modern slavery. Injustice is all around us and most of us are very familiar with what it looks like.

You know why this happens? Because people's hearts are far from God. (Aren't you glad you came to church?) It's all around us, friends.

Today we continue in our *Timeless* series by taking a look at the book of Micah.

Micah was all too familiar with injustice and people whose hearts were far from God. That's why he was called into ministry: to warn God's people that judgment was coming unless they dumped their corrupt religion and started living right.

¹ <https://www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/slavery-in-history/>

About Micah

Micah's ministry ran from about 735-700BC (give or take a decade). He was from a little country village called Moresheth about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem along the Philistine border—and his name means, "Who is like Yahweh?" We don't know anything about his family or the specifics which led to his prophetic call. Some scholars think he was a man of fields before ministry. Others think he was a tradesman. Either way, it's probably safe to say Micah would have been more comfortable hanging out with the working class than the religious or political elite. One scholar called him "the blue-collar prophet!"²

Micah was a contemporary with Isaiah whose ministry was also in Judah and started 15-20 years before Micah's. "Plumb Line" Amos, who was also from Judah, was already on the scene prophesying to Israel in the Northern Kingdom when Micah came along. So, lots of good men were speaking to God's people in the 8th Century BC.

Specifically, Micah served during the times of three Judean kings: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Jotham was a good guy—built the high gate of the Temple. Ahaz was a scumbag and Hezekiah was king when Assyria came calling. Micah spoke primarily to Judah but, as you'll see in a moment, a significant piece was aimed directly at Israel in the north for the purpose of getting the Southern Kingdom's attention.

About Judah

Judah was fat and happy—at least the leaders were. There was a giant gap between the rich and the poor and the wealthy leaders, suffering from **acute affluenza**, were willing to use and abuse anyone to boost their wealth. Because their religious life had again become corrupt and their hearts weren't fully God's, leaders didn't lead. Instead, they used their position to mistreat and take advantage of the widows, orphans and poor in despicable ways just to keep the money coming in.

² Smith, J. E. (1994). *The Minor Prophets* (p. 136). Joplin, MO: College Press.

And so, the book of Micah begins with what looks like a courtroom scene where Israel and Judah are being indicted for their crimes and Yahweh Himself serves not only as Judge, but as a Witness against them. What we're about to see is that God will judge sin, but He's always looking for an opportunity to restore. Take a look at chapter one.

Indicted for Idolatry

"The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

² Hear, you peoples, all of you,
listen, earth and all who live in it,
that the Sovereign Lord may bear witness against you,
the Lord from his holy temple."

This is like "Hear ye, hear ye! Court is now in session. The Most Holy God of the Universe presiding." Then the next couple verses describe how God is coming to judge with unstoppable power. Then the indictment is declared in verse 5:

⁵ All this is because of Jacob's transgression,
because of the sins of the people of Israel.
What is Jacob's transgression?
Is it not Samaria?
What is Judah's high place?
Is it not Jerusalem?"

There it is: God is charging the Northern Kingdom with engaging in idolatry in their capital city. But that's not surprising because every one of Israel's kings were godless. (*Speed of the leader, speed of the team, right?*) But Judah had a handful of godly kings. So it should have bothered them when God called them out and declared their capital city a 'high place.' That can't be good because Jerusalem was where God's Temple was located. To call Jerusalem a 'high place' means something is **seriously wrong** with Judah's worship, too. Because of this, God's judgment is coming... (v 6-9, 15)

⁶“Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble,
a place for planting vineyards.

I will pour her stones into the valley
and lay bare her foundations.

⁷All her **idols** will be broken to pieces;
all her **temple gifts** will be burned with fire;
I will destroy all her **images**.

Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes,
as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.”

⁹For Samaria’s plague is *incurable*;
it has spread to Judah.

It has reached the very gate of *my people*,
even to Jerusalem itself.”

...

¹⁵I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah.

Israel was indicted for idolatry, found guilty and judgment came swiftly. Any guesses who God used to crush the Northern Kingdom? If you said, “the brutal **Assyrian army**” that Brian spoke of last week, you’d be right. Around 722BC, Israel was crushed by the Assyrians and the people deported. It’s likely that some managed to escape from the north and fled toward Judah hoping to avoid captivity. This means that Judah would have seen an influx of war immigrants, mostly widows and orphans, who were trying to get their feet under them and build a new life. How do you think those unwelcome ‘foreigners’ were going to be treated by the rich and powerful?

Israel was done. Toast. But what about Judah? Since the virus of idolatry made it all the way to their capital city, they’re just as guilty as Israel. Judah saw Israel fall. So, unless Judah made some serious changes, they would be next! This first chapter is a giant warning sign! When your relationship with God isn’t right, **nothing’s right**.

When things aren’t right with God

Tell me that’s not true! How’s your marriage when things aren’t right with God? What’s it like to come to church when things aren’t right with God?

How's your relationship with your parents when things aren't right with God? How's your job performance? How about your friendships? When you're not walking in obedience to God, what's it like at school? How well do you lead when you aren't walking closely with God? How's your attitude? What about the words that come to mind (or out of your mouth)? What behaviors pop-up when things aren't right with God? See what I'm saying? When your relationship with God isn't right, nothing's right. You don't work right. You don't sleep right. You don't think right. Because you're not right!

I'll take it a step further: When your relationship with God **isn't right**, every other relationship **is at risk**. Idolatrous Judah was not right with God. They embraced the wicked stuff that Ahab and Jezebel did in Israel: Ba'alism (fertility worship) and Ashera poles (6:16a). They were mixed up in witchcraft, idol worship, incense to false gods and child sacrifices. King Ahaz (the King of Judah!) loved to dabble in all that and more (2 Kings 16). The first of Micah's scathing rebukes was against Judah's idolatry. But the bulk of his condemnations focused on the grave injustices committed by Judah's leaders so they could maintain their luxurious lifestyles. Idolatry led them astray and it showed by how they treated others.

That's what happens when God is no longer the Standard by which people assess right and wrong. It's what happens when truth and righteousness are no longer *objective* standards but *subjective* to the desires of the people in charge. When people stop looking to Him to show them how to do relationships properly, then it's everyone for themselves. This is exactly what happened with Judah. The ones in charge (Prophets, Priests & Kings) weren't focused on God, but themselves, and they used orphans, widows and the poor as a means to increase their own wealth.

Prophets, Priests and Kings

Micah continually rebuked Judah's leaders for abusing their positions for the sake of their own financial gain. Judah's prophets would tell you **whatever you wanted** to hear if you gave them a good meal and a glass

of wine. "Gimme a good meal, I'll give you a good oracle." Slip them some cash and they'll have great things to share 'from God' (3:5, 11). What's worse, because the prophets weren't following God, they would tell Micah to stop *his* 'false' prophecies because, after all, "We're God's chosen people. God doesn't get angry at His chosen ones" (2:7). Their theology was a joke!

The priests were just as bad. People who came to the Temple for teaching would be charged a fee (3:11). "You wanna learn about God? How much you got?"

Government leaders, like Kings and judges, didn't really *lead* at all. They just **served themselves**. Some of Micah's most severe words are directed at those in the government. God calls them the ones who "hate good and love evil" (3:2) and goes on to describe them as butchers and wild beasts who destroy the flock of orphans, widows and the poor (3:3-4). Take a look at this from chapter 3,

(Show 3:11 - Slide Only)

"Her leaders judge for a bribe,
her priests teach for a price,
and her prophets tell fortunes for money.
Yet they look for the Lord's support and say,
'Is not the Lord among us?
No disaster will come upon us.'"

Isn't the Lord good? We are His and He is with us. He's like the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night! They were SO far from the heart of God that they took His covenant promise to always be with them as an unconditional guarantee, regardless of their **faith or behavior**.³ Friends, this is so wrong!

Judah's leaders continuously oppressed some of the most vulnerable in society because there was money to be made. Remember the war

³ Smith, Gary V. *The NIV Application Commentary: Hosea/Amos/Micah*. Zondervan, 2001. p 494

immigrants who fled from the North? You know these were some of the most severely mistreated because they were from the Northern Kingdom –they aren't 'our people.' Micah describes how leaders would fall asleep at night dreaming of ways to abuse others because they could get away with it. This kind of 'leadership' is what led God's people away from Him. The whole country was going to be judged because their leaders stunk!! They're doing everything God told them *not* to do before they even entered the Promised Land. **Injustice runs rampant** when people aren't right with God. And God says (2:8), "Lately my people have risen up like an enemy."

Looking to Restore

I want to drill down on an important piece really quick. Judah is in the hot seat. They're idolatrous and unjust. Judgment is coming because God will judge sin but, and this is important, He's always looking for the opportunity to restore. Five times (2:12-13, 4:7, 5:7, 8; 7:18) in Micah's prophecy, God tells Judah that a faithful remnant will be restored and that God, Himself, will be their Leader...their King! Look at 2:12-13

"I will surely gather all of you, Jacob;
I will surely bring together **the remnant** of Israel.
I will bring them together like sheep in a pen,
like a flock in its pasture;
the place will throng with people.
¹³The One who breaks open the way will go up before them;
they will break through the gate and go out.
Their King will pass through before them,
the LORD at their head."

This is pointing to the Messiah...to Jesus!

Check out 4:7

⁷I will make the lame **my remnant**,
those driven away a strong nation.

**The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion
from that day and forever.**

Guys, God is eager for this. He is holy and righteous, and He **will judge sin**, but He's always looking for the opportunity **to restore**. That's why He sent Micah. Maybe, just maybe, they'll listen and return to God with their whole heart, come under the Covenant, and be right with God again. Do you need to hear that today? Do you need to get right with God?

Now, turn to chapter 6. This is where the courtroom really gets tense.

Back in the Courtroom [6:1-2]

Listen to what the LORD says:

*"Stand up, plead my case before the mountains;
let the hills hear what you have to say.*

*²"Hear, you mountains, the LORD's accusation;
listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth.*

*For the LORD has a case against his people;
he is lodging a charge against Israel.*

This is a great time to pause and talk through the key words as we've walked through the series. Hosea...**Harlot**. Joel...**Locusts**. Amos...Plumb Line. Obadiah...**Justice Cometh**. Jonah...Fish. And the key word for the book of Micah...**Indictment**. God's formal charges against His people for their crimes.

We're back in court and the King of the Universe, the perfect Judge, is about to present charges against His people. But, before He does, you see this tenderhearted bit of questioning. God is still hoping they **will be restored**. Read along from v 3.

*³"My people, what have I done to you?
How have I burdened you? Answer me.*

*⁴I brought you up out of Egypt
and redeemed you from the land of slavery.*

*I sent Moses to lead you,
also Aaron and Miriam.*

*⁵My people, remember
what Balak king of Moab plotted
and what Balaam son of Beor answered.*

Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, (
that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."

It's like God is saying, "Wake up, guys! I've been on your team all along. I've been your champion. I set you free. I protected you. I empowered you. I brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey. What happened?" Have you ever found yourself out in the weeds wondering how you got there? There was a time in your life when you wouldn't shut up about His goodness. You couldn't say "Thank you!" enough for His willingness to save you. You were almost an irritant (okay, you *were* an irritant) to your unbelieving friends and family because God was always part of your conversation. You were prayerful and faithful and generous and kind. But, somehow, you slipped. Not sure how...not really sure why...all you know is that you're not right with God and nothing else is right either. Maybe you need to take some time today to remember what God has done in your life. Maybe it'll lead you to repentance and draw you back into a right relationship with Him.

But Judah didn't want a history lesson. They didn't want to walk down memory lane. Instead, they jumped into 'fix it' mode. Look at verses 6 & 7.

Empty Rituals

⁶With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?

⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

See? They don't get it. They think that just showing up at the Temple means something. Sacrifices are intended to show a broken and contrite heart—they're not a box to check and say, "I met my obligation." Judah **couldn't remember** how to live in their covenant relationship with God. They actually believed that if they *gave enough* sacrifices, at great financial cost (Remember: it's all about the money!), that God would be pleased. Even worse, they proposed child sacrifice as a worship alternative. That's precisely what God hates! Israel can't remember how

their relationship with Yahweh is supposed to be because they've fiddled with false gods and idols and have been chasing money for so long.

They're pretending to be interested in the things of God but have no idea what He really wants. They're going through the motions. They're going to the Temple. They're bringing a 'sacrifice,' but their hearts aren't in it. They're doing just enough to say "I'm faithful" but not so much that it messes with their lives. Israel's worship was just empty ritual and it broke God's heart. So, Micah tells Judah what God really wants. Look at v8.

What God really wants

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

This sounds familiar, doesn't it? You get pieces of this from Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus. It sounds a lot like the Great Commandment that Jesus explains in Matthew 22 (vv.37-40): Love God. Love others. Specifically, "Justice describes **right relationships** based on God's view of what is appropriate."⁴ All of this was explained in Exodus at Sinai. For God's people, there is no room for violence, abuse, or anything else in an effort to take someone else's stuff. God is not okay with unjust relationships—and not just historically... but even today.

Mercy is the Hebrew word "hesed" (have to clear your throat as you say it) and it emphasizes a steadfast **lovingkindness**. It's so deep that it touches every relationship and the actions you take in those relationships: from how you follow God to how you relate to your family to how you respond to the needs of the least, lost and lonely. *Hesed* is love that moves.

Walking humbly is all about understanding who you are and Whose you are. You walk with Him. You live in obedience to Him. It's knowing that only God can give you the provision, protection, purpose and peace you long for.

⁴ Ibid. p 553

This is what God wants: justice, mercy and an obedient walk with Him. Injustice is inconceivable because you're in right relationship with Him. Without that, all bets are off. Like we talked about, when things aren't right with God, nothing's right. Everything is skewed. When things aren't right with God, every other relationship is at risk of being used and abused by someone with more power or authority.

Needless to say, Judah didn't pass the 6:8 test, so God moved forward with His final indictment. Look at verse 10.

Judah indicted for injustice

¹⁰ Am I still to forget your *ill-gotten treasures*, you wicked house,
and the *short ephah*, which is accursed?

¹¹ Shall I acquit someone with *dishonest scales*,
with a bag of *false weights*?

¹² Your rich people are *violent*;
your inhabitants are *liars*
and their tongues speak deceitfully.

From there, God renders His verdict and pronounces judgment: Judah will be destroyed, just like Israel. Historically, we know the rest of the story because in 701BC, Assyria came knocking, but good King Hezekiah listened to Micah, the people repented and, because God is always looking for an opportunity to restore, Jerusalem was saved. Ultimately, the people returned to their old ways and, around 600BC, Judah was destroyed by Babylon and the people taken from their land.

Reason for Hope

I want to close with this: look at 7:18-20 with me.

¹⁸ Who is a God like you,
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?

You do not stay angry forever
but delight to show mercy.

¹⁹ You will again have compassion on us;
you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

²⁰ You will be faithful to Jacob,

and show love to Abraham,
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors
in days long ago.

These final words of Micah remind us that God is **delighted** to show mercy. In the end, a faithful remnant of God's people will be restored—because God keeps His promises. Even today, those who come to Him in humility and a desire to turn from their sin, will be met with forgiveness. Not only that, but He will take all your sinful 'yuck' and toss it in the ocean—never to be brought up again. Some of you need to get right with God today and you know it. Don't mess around because, as we've seen, *God will judge sin, but He's always looking for an opportunity to restore.* Today could be your restoration day. If that's you, and you're on campus, come talk to us. If you're watching online, send me an email: phil@foothillscp.org. We want to celebrate with you, answer questions, pray with you. Whatever it takes to help you get right with God and begin living the kind of life He built you to have.

Application

Here are a few things I want you to take with you today.

With the injustices that are going on in our country right now, undoubtedly, you're having all kinds of thoughts and feelings as you process it all. Make sure to

- Take what's going on inside of you (thoughts, feelings, potential actions) before the Lord and ask Him, "Is my heart in alignment with Yours in this?" Start there.

And as you seek to be people of justice and mercy in your daily lives, you can ask yourself questions like these:

- How can we use our time and finances to help the poor?
- How can we show justice, not just in a courtroom, but in a living room when our family or friends bring us a problem?
- How can we walk with God daily, making our social media feeds a fragrant offering to Him?⁵

⁵ Great ideas from Arlene Pellicane of Proverbs 31 Ministries: <https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2020/06/22/no-extra-credit-needed>

Here are a couple other things you can do to better understand how to live a life of justice and mercy:

- Have friends who look different from you talk with you about racial discrimination.

And I really want to recommend that you

- Watch our Studio conversation, Ep. 20 "Unity in Diversity" on [YouTube](#).
Good conversation about a difficult topic in our country right now.

CLOSE

He has shown you, friends, what is good and what He wants from you: live justly, love mercy and walk in humble obedience with Him.

Let's Pray.

Thanksgiving for His willingness to forgive. His patience. For the cross where judgment was poured out and freedom to live fully in Him. May we be Your people, wholeheartedly, and may our lives show our committed love to you by how we treat those around us.

Remind about offering: online, in the mail, (on campus) boxes in the back as you go.