

Route Sixty-Six

Part Thirty-Three

Micah

Mercy Triumphs

(John 5:39; Micah 6:8)

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501*

212-6999

pastorpaul@branchofhope.org

www.branchofhope.org

3/1/2020

310)

Route Sixty-Six

Part Thirty-Three

Micah

Mercy Triumphs

(John 5:39; Micah 6:8)

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)?

Introduction

When we get to Revelation, we will spend a good deal of time examining the beastly nature of government overreach in our lives. It's been said of Micah that he traces the perversion and adversity of the people to the misrule of those over them. It would be naïve to think there was ever a time when the leaders of our, or any, nation were so righteous that they deserved our unwavering devotion. But at least there was some general agreement regarding what constituted goodness/righteousness.

What we are witnessing now in the public debates of our would-be leaders is a celebration of the most debased and ungodly behaviors imaginable. And it would appear that in a mere generation many young people have been bewitched into ignoring that which was so obvious so recently. Add to this that many of those who aggressively promote ungodliness, not only want to manage our morality but also desire to manage the intimacies of our lives.

What unites so many politicians in our budding beast of a government is how they think it is their job to direct our finances, fix our jobs, determine our wages, oversee our healthcare, educate our children, govern our very thinking regarding my neighbors, feed the poor, care for the elderly and provide for the orphan on my behalf (thus relieving me of such obligations and soothing my guilt for personal inactivity), display the type of art they consider beneficial to my soul and a million other things.

On top of this, many are pressing for a socialistic/communistic form of government in pursuit of their beastly and misdirected source of altruisms. Many of our youth have been wooed into thinking that giving all of these responsibilities and economic endeavors to a centralized government is a good idea. Much of this is accompanied by the vilification of big and private business. There is a (not entirely unreasonable) push to recognize the value of anti-trust laws and monopolies. There is (again, not unreasonable) instilling of fear of market dominance and the concentration of power in big companies.

No doubt, some level of governance is of value when it comes to private business (Deut. 25:13-15). But what level of market dominance can possibly match a federal government running all goods and services? It is the epitome of a monopoly. But it is not a mere monopoly. It is a monopoly with a standing military that has the ability to fine you and imprison you if you fail to comply.

What we read in Micah, in terms of the oppression and misrule of the leaders of Israel, is found in recent history under the names of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Castro, Che Guevara, Pol Pot and others. These are proven failures in terms of the blessedness of the people over whom they governed. Yet in a mere generation or two, they have once again become options.

Survey of Micah

Micah, similar to other prophetic books, opens with a warning of imminent judgment. Through the powerful Assyrian armies, God will bring His judgments upon Israel. Mountains will melt, valleys will split, there will be mourning for Israel and Judah. It is a time when lies prevail. People had become so darkened in their understanding that they don't know the truth when they hear it. It is in this massive fog of lies that God asks, what amounts to be an obvious, yet rhetorical question:

**Do not My words do good To him who walks uprightly
(Micah 2:7b)?**

It is remarkable how many lies are spoken in the public discourse, yet we (as a people) don't seem to care. It has come to be expected. But a nation will only last so long if they choose to expel the truth as a necessity

for their existence. In the midst of the mourning for Israel and Judah, we read that **“her wounds are incurable” (Micah 1:9)**. Judgment was an inevitability.

But it is not as if they are yet ready to acknowledge their own apostasy and ungodliness. There remains a religious lip-service in the midst of their nefariousness.

Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, “Is not the Lord among us (Micah 3:11)?”

We live in a day when those who would lead us, both spiritually and politically, trumpet religious fidelity while a mere moment later endorse that which is base and abhorrent when one takes the time to examine God’s holy word. If there was ever a time to reinvigorate *Sola Scriptura* (that the infallible and inerrant word from God is found in the Scriptures alone) it is now.

Christ in Micah

It is little wonder that the prophet rapidly moves to a time and a hope that goes beyond their particular nation and their current leaders. In chapter four we are called to consider **“the latter days.”** This should not be thought of as the end of history, but the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant. It might be of help to read this the way it is used by the author of Hebrews.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

However one might understand **“last days”** *eschatou ton heremon touton*, the author’s use of the near demonstrative, **“these”** indicates that he believe he was living in them. Let’s recognize that God will continue to plead with Israel to repent in chapters six and seven. But that call to

repentance is done in the light of God's larger, eternal promise that comes from a Ruler born in Bethlehem—Christ in Micah (Micah 5:2).

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from of old, From everlasting (Micah 5:2).

In a series like Route Sixty-Six (where we are searching out what the Old Testament says of Jesus) one is hard-pressed to find a more obvious reference to Jesus in the Old Testament than the one before us. When a troubled Herod inquired of his chief priests and scribes as to the place where the Christ was to be born...

They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel'" (Matthew 2:5, 6).

We read in Micah the glorious expectation of what this true Ruler will accomplish by His gospel and Spirit. Their current government/nation will fail. But God's promise is from everlasting to everlasting. Let us read just a few verses, realizing that even though there is no mention of the Second Coming in this entire book, some choose to assign all of this to that which takes place after Jesus comes again. That is simply not a natural reading of the text. What will happen as a result of that baby born in Bethlehem? Let us read a bit.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it.² Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ³ He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off;

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. ⁴ But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make *them* afraid; For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken. ⁵ For all people walk each in the name of his god, But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God Forever and ever (Micah 4:1-5).

It is easy to see where some would scoff at this happening prior to the Second Coming. The idea that a nation would not lift a sword against another nation (but rather beat it into a plowshare) sounds so fanciful. Yet Jesus needn't do any more work to accomplish this. The cross is sufficient to accomplish peace on earth. What we read here is nothing more or less than the fruit of the Great Commission.

Of course, those are very macrocosmic, big-picture promises. But what of you and me individually? The Canadian clinical psychologist, Jordan Peterson, took a great deal of criticism by suggesting that people who want to change the world, should begin by cleaning their own rooms. And though there may be some big-ticket items in terms of a better world, it is through Micah that we are offered what has been called the true essence of religion.

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)?

These are virtues repeated by Jesus in His indictment against the scribes and Pharisee.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others (Matthew 23:23).

Justice, mercy and faithfulness (which is synonymous to walking humbly with God) is the essence of religion. One might even say that

justice and mercy are the means by which one walks humbly with God. Yet I am not sure if we appreciate just how at odds these two virtues can be and how the full and meaningful application of these two attributes can only be found in Christ. If it can be put in the form of a question: 'Do you desire justice or mercy?' Or to put it another way, 'Are we called to offer justice or mercy?' Because justice would be getting what we deserve, and mercy would be not getting what we deserve (in a negative sense).

In a very simple sense, it would appear that what we read in Micah and see repeated by Jesus is that we should be fair-minded people who are ready to offer mercy, grace and forgiveness. James uses the same words to describe a sort of battle between the two.

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

James is not teaching here that our mercy toward others is the grounds of our acquittal. But when we begin to grasp that which is just and taste the sweet joy of deliverance from that justice through the mercy of God found in Christ, it will produce mercy toward our fellow man.

It is of the highest degree of import that Christians meditate upon the message that the full judgment of God fell upon that child born in Bethlehem, of whom Micah writes.

Questions for Study

1. What type of effects to the leaders of a culture/nation have on the people? How have you seen this work out (pages 2, 3)?
2. How do God's words function in those who walk uprightly? What does it mean to walk uprightly (pages 3, 4)?
3. Discuss how leaders will continue to have lip-service in their convictions about God. How does one determine if it is more than a mere show (page 4)?
4. What is meant by "latter days" and why is that important (pages 4, 5)?
5. Investigate ways we see Christ in Micah (pages 4, 5).
6. Justice and mercy are valuable Christian virtues. How do we see them interact with each other (pages 6, 7)?