

# 11.12.22 pm

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Date: 11 December 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ]     A warm welcome to the service this evening. We'll begin this time of worship. We'll sing to God's praise from Psalm 90, the first two verses of Psalm 90.

We sing in Gaelic, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, before thou ever hadst brought forth the mountains great or small, and ever thou hadst formed the earth and all the world abroad, even now from everlasting art to everlasting God.

Let's sing these words to God's praise. We'll remain seated to sing in Gaelic, and after we've sang, the Gaelic prayer will be led by John McSween, I think.

Is that right, John? John will lead us in Gaelic afterwards. Oh, he can do it.

Thank you.

[ 1 : 33 ]     Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 4 : 03 ]     Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 6 : 33 ]     Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 9 : 03 ]     Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 11 : 33 ]    Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.

Amen.

Thank you.

[ 14 : 03 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And we'll read from Micah.

[ 17 : 03 ] Amen.

In those days.

Amen.

And we're going to sing.

Yes, he will come down, And we're going to sing.

[ 20 : 33 ] For the Lord, He's the Lord, All of the Lord,

And we're going to sing.

For the Lord, Amen.

And we're going to sing, Thank you.

And we're going to sing, And we're going to sing, even what the Lord, that we're going to sing,

[ 26 : 33 ] And we're going to sing, our Lord, And we're going to sing,

We thank you, And we're going to sing, And we're going to sing,

And we're going to sing, And that you would say, And that you would keep your people,

And I think it's on the book, And I knew it, And I know there's,

And I'm going to sing, And I know there, And I know there, and I know there, and I know, And one of the people, have a very similar pattern and structure.

[ 32 : 46 ] If you look at Micah 5 just now, you see in verse 1 that there is the reality of darkness, and then it's followed in verses 2 to 5 with the promise of incoming light.

So I want to think tonight about this message that Micah brings as he delivers this promise from God that will come true essentially at Christmas, at the coming of Jesus.

So first of all, I want to think for a moment about the prophet. The first point is prophet. Before we get into the text, let's ask the question, well, who is Micah?

And the name Micah comes from the Hebrew word Michayahu, if that's how you say it. And it means who is like Jehovah? Who is like Jehovah?

And that's the legacy that Micah leaves. He asks a question with his words and through his life. Who is like God? We don't know very much about Micah.

[ 33 : 58 ] We just know his name, and we know that he's consistently pointing us to God. He isn't on social media. We can't do a search on him.

We don't know what he ate for breakfast. We don't know how many restaurants he checked into in the last month. There's no selfies of Micah in this short little book.

Micah just tells us very little about himself. He points us away from himself. He points us to God. And so right from the get-go here, we have a challenging example to us.

In an age where there is so much pointing to self, Micah teaches us to look away from self and to look to God.

And there's also great encouragement when we think about Micah as a person. You know, he isn't on a celebrity list.

[ 34 : 55 ] He isn't up there with those who are recognized, even in the world of prophets. He's a minor prophet. He's just an ordinary man. But God used him.

And when you think about the place that he refers to here in these verses, Bethlehem. Bethlehem at that time, it was a nowhere.

Just a little rural place. Nobody went on their holidays to Bethlehem. There was no top ten places to visit that had Bethlehem anywhere near them.

It was just an unknown rural place. Micah's just an unknown man. But this is the man that God chose.

And that was the place that God determined that Jesus would come into the world. And that's how God works for our encouragement.

[ 36 : 00 ] That's how God works. There are no little people in God's view. He doesn't pick out the celebrities.

He doesn't pick out the ones that the paparazzi are running after. There's no little people. There's no little places. He doesn't just focus on London and Paris and New York.

Every place is important. Every person is important. God uses the little people. He uses the little things in the eyes of this world to do his work.

Remember Paul, when he's preaching to the church in Corinth, he reminds them, this is the way that God works. He says, brothers and sisters, this is 1 Corinthians 1, verses 26 to 31.

Paul says, brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth.

[ 37 : 06 ] But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are.

So that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God.

That is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, says the Apostle Paul, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.

And Micah, although we don't know much about him, we know that he boasted in the Lord. His name was, who is like the Lord?

Who is like Jehovah? His message, Micah 7, 18, is a great little digest of his message. He says, who is a God like you who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?

[ 38 : 16 ] You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. So first of all, we see the prophet Micah. And he's pointing us past himself and to God, to the character, to the nature, to the work of God.

And secondly, we go from the prophet to looking at the problems because that's where Micah begins. He begins by facing the reality of the fact that God's people were facing problems.

Verse 1, Marshal your troops, O city of troops. This is Jerusalem. For a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod.

And just reflecting on this morning, we kind of got the context this morning because Isaiah and Micah are writing into the same world. There's a sense of threat. There's a sense of menace from Assyria, from Babylon.

The troops in the city were mobilized. They were on red alert. And Micah is foreseeing foreseeing in this prophecy, the Babylonian siege that did come against Jerusalem.

[ 39 : 25 ] If you want to read about that, you can go later and look at 2 Kings 25, the beginning of the chapter. We see how Jerusalem were hit. The siege came.

Jerusalem fell. And so Micah, he's foreseeing these problems. The enemies of God would attack. They would strike Israel's ruler, King Zedekiah.

God's people were facing, and they did face, they did have to endure very real problems. They would experience days of darkness. And so Micah, he begins with that difficult message.

He says, we're looking at problems. And that's a message that was not just for them. It's a message that comes for every age, for every place in different degrees.

Jesus said to us, in this world, you will have trouble. that the devil, God's enemy, is always active.

[ 40 : 34 ] He's always seeking to attack God's people. If we're Christians, we shouldn't expect anything other than to be always under siege from Satan.

So what do we do when we face that? when we endure, when we face problems, what do we do? Where do we look?

How do we respond? Well, we remember the word of Micah. And he says, who is like Jehovah? You look at the problem and face that and focus on that, we'll be overwhelmed.

If we look at ourselves and think, can I handle this? Then if we've got any sense of realism, we know that within three seconds we can't. And so the message that we are given through this little book is look to the Lord.

We look to Jesus when we face problems. And Jesus is Israel's ultimate ruler. and Jesus is the one verse one as you see the phrases used there.

[ 41 : 57 ] Jesus is the one who was struck. He knew he would be struck. He determined that he would allow himself to be struck in order to deliver us from the problem of sin and Satan and death and hell.

So we see the prophet. We listen into the problems that Micah highlights as he begins the message. Thirdly, we come to the promise.

Look at verse two. In verse two, we have this promise that we've become familiar with through all these carol services over the years. But you, Bethlehem and Fratha, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

And so this promise of God comes through Micah. And it's a promise that is grounded in geography and in history and in reality.

God is speaking through Micah about a real place, Bethlehem, that they could see on a map that they could go and visit. God is not speaking about some fantasy world place.

[ 43 : 26 ] It's a real place. This is a promise grounded in geography and God is speaking about a real clan of people. Judah was a real clan. They all knew that. We can read about the life of the clan of Judah right through the Old Testament.

Do a search. You can see them in Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Ezekiel, Zechariah. The history of the tribe of Judah is very clear for us to see.

These were real people God was speaking about. This is a real place that God is speaking about and God is speaking about a real person who would come down this line of Judah.

who would be a descendant of David. Through Micah, God is promising the coming of a real human man, flesh and blood.

But this man would not just be any man. He would be the God man. Because this man's origins, although they can be traced through time, go back beyond the beginning of time to ancient times.

[ 44 : 43 ] This man is the ancient of days. Prior, the commentator says, Micah's description of this ruler's origin stresses the historic link with King David many centuries before, but it also suggests even older lineage.

The word for old is used of God himself in Habakkuk 1.12, art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God.

And so what God is promising through Micah, it is clearly fulfilled in Jesus. The child who would be born where?

In Bethlehem. And this promise that comes to Micah is speaking to us about the child that John wrote about in John 1, where he takes us back to before the beginning of time.

In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God, ancient of days. all things were made through him, without him was not anything made that was made, in him was life.

[ 46 : 03 ] And the life was the light of men, the light shines in the darkness, the darkness has not overcome it. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son, from the Father, full of grace and truth.

so the promised one that God was speaking of through Micah, the promised one who would be the answer to the problems that God's people faced was Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God.

And the carol expounds it so clearly. These carols are so packed full of theology. And it so simply put, O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by, yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light, the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

so the promise that Micah brings from God to us is fulfilled in Jesus.

And if you want a little bit more application than that, then take from this the encouragement that God's promises can be trusted.

[ 47 : 43 ] every one of God's promises can be trusted. They're not fairy stories. That's the way so much of the Bible is presented to us in education and in modern culture.

It's just fairy stories. It's allegory. It's myths. It's all kinds of things. It's not grounded in reality, and yet what's crystal clear through these prophecies is that this is reality.

This is gritty, earthy reality. God's promises, they come down to ground level, and they can be trusted.

You know, we make promises, and we want to keep them, but so often we break them. And sometimes we look at all promises and we see them as fragile as the ones that we make.

God's promises are not fragile. They're not questionable. They're not precarious. They're sure.

[ 49 : 00 ] They're certain. They can be trusted. God's promise of salvation meant the coming of Jesus from heaven to earth on a rescue mission to live for us, to die for us, to rise for us so that we can be saved if we believe in him.

So that's the promise. Fourth point is God's people, we're going to have to have patience. we're going to have to be patient.

Verse 3 says, therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

And so the message that's coming through here is you're going to have to be patient. there are problems at present, says Micah, as we look around us.

There are problems that are still to come as he looks ahead into the future as God enables him. And Micah says there's the promise of God's help. You can count on it, you can be sure of it.

[ 50 : 14 ] But in the meantime, you're going to have to be patient. And like a mother who's waiting through hours of painful labor, that's the image that's used in verse 3, God's people would have to wait for this promise to come true.

And it would be dark and it would be a difficult time as they waited. Hale, the commentator, says for the 700 years between Micah's prophecy and the birth of Christ, Israel was in effect abandoned by God because of its sin.

And yet, the promise would come true. And when Micah uses this phrase in verse 3 about labor, it may have been that he's referring to the painful suffering of being under God's judgment in a period where they drift from him.

Or it may actually have been a supernatural foreseeing of the physical birth, the labor that Mary would go through.

deliverer, the Messiah in Bethlehem. But the message for God's people was that they needed to be patient, to wait upon the Lord, to believe that everything that God promised would in God's time and in God's way come true.

[ 52 : 01 ] and they're looking forward, not knowing when this is going to happen. We can actually look back to the time when it did happen because everything that was promised in 700 years from the time of writing is fulfilled in Jesus.

so we have the prophet, we have the problems, we have the promise, we have the patience that's required, and finally we have the promise of peace.

You can see that in verses 4 and verse 5. again think of this picture of Jesus because what we're getting here verse by verse, even word by word, phrase by phrase, in this little section is we're getting a picture of Jesus.

It's as if the pixels are multiplying and we're seeing much more clearly who it is that would come, who it is that would bring peace. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they will live securely for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth, and he will be their peace.

This is Jesus. We see here a picture of the one to come, and he's the one who will stand, says Micah.

[ 53 : 38 ] And think about that in the context of all, even that we've thought about in the last two weeks. Think back to Genesis 3, Satan comes, he attacks Adam, he attacks Eve, they fall.

Sin rushes in. But Jesus is the one who stands. Adam fell, and we fell with him.

But Jesus, the last Adam, is the one who stands. Even though Satan threw everything he had at him, in the wilderness, in the temptation, as he struck on the cross, Jesus did not fall.

But he is the one who will and who did stand. And he's the one who will shepherd his flock, it says there in verse 4.

And again, we have that picture of Jesus. We're all like sheep, we've gone astray, we're going astray, we turn every one of us to our own way, it's a picture of sin.

[ 54 : 49 ] And yet Jesus came as the good shepherd, the one who would lay down his life for the sheep, the one on whom the iniquity of us all would be laid, so that we could be brought peace.

We're seeing Jesus here. The one who stands, the one who will shepherd his flock. We see in Jesus the one who is the strength of the Lord.

And I don't have time to go into any of this, but just read through one of the gospels tonight. Who else in this world could ever come with the strength to overcome disease, demons, and death?

No one. But Jesus, he is the one in whom is the strength of the Lord, and he is the one who is able to allow us to live, verse 4, securely.

He's able to give us security. And only Jesus can give us security. You know, our health and our wealth, it can crumble in a moment.

[ 56 : 00 ] Our careers can be on an upward trajectory, one bad move, one wrong email, everything's gone. Our families can be stable for a period, one flare-up, and everything's in ruin.

We know that everything in this world that we value so much, it's so insecure.

But Jesus is the one, he's the only one who can give us true security, a security that begins in time and goes on eternally.

So in these verses, Micah is showing us Jesus. He's showing us the greatness of Jesus.

He's showing us the one who would come first to Bethlehem, but as it says there, whose greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. death. And tonight, we see that.

[ 57 : 12 ] You know, we can think back 2,000 years to a cold hill in Bethlehem with old grubby shepherds out in the darkness and the light of heaven broke through and the stars and the angels declared the greatness of Jesus.

But we can fast forward 2,700 years beyond that to a wee hall in a wee island off the north of Scotland where a handful of us come together and what are we doing?

We are celebrating the greatness of Jesus. That's why we're here. At least I hope that's why we're here. We gather together to celebrate the greatness of Jesus as we worship him.

And he will be says Micah their peace. So Micah prophesied it. As we think about Christmas the angels echoed it.

We sang it. All glory be to God on high and to the earth be peace good will henceforth from heaven to men begin and never cease.

[ 59 : 00 ] And that's what we finish tonight. With that truth that we can hang on to through whatever we endure in this world we have the truth we have the promise that Jesus is our peace if we believe in him.

Everything might be chaotic in your life I don't know. We're good at putting on faces but whatever we're going through whatever we're facing however turbulent things may seem we can have peace if we are trusting in Christ.

Jesus remember he said peace I give to you my peace I leave with you it's not of this world don't let your hearts be troubled don't be afraid we can hang on to that if we are trusting in Jesus so let us look to him let us believe in him let us worship him and let us follow the lead of little Micah and use our lives to say not look at me but look to the Lord who is like Jehovah let's pray heavenly father we thank you for your promises we thank you for these prophecies we thank you that they are true and we look back on the truth of them as we celebrate

Christmas help us we pray to see the glory of Jesus your son help us we pray to receive him as our savior help us we pray to know the blessing of his eternal peace and help us we pray in this week to use our lives to use our voices to point people not to us but to him and we pray this in Jesus name amen we'll sing to finish off oh little town of Bethlehem how still we see you lie we see through how still we see you

Upon your deep and dreamlessly the silent stars go by.

[ 62 : 04 ] Yet in your dark sea shining is everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above. While waters sleep the ages keep their watch of wandering love.

O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth. And praises sing to God the King and peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given.

So God imparts to you, but marks the blessings of His hand.

[ 63 : 34 ] No ear, the ear is dropping, but in this world of sin. Where restores will receive His turn, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray.

Cast out our sin and enter in, be more in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels, the great light tidings tell. O come to us, abide with us, our glory Emmanuel.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forevermore. Amen.