Micah's Prophecy of Worldwide Peace - Rev Sandy Gillies

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[0:00] So we'll turn back to Micah chapter 4 and we'll read again verse 3.! So Micah lived in the small town of Moresheth in the southern kingdom of Judah.

He lived in the same times as Isaiah. And Isaiah was bringing God's word to the people in Jerusalem. Whereas Micah brought God's word to the people of the northern kingdom as well as to the people of Judah.
So both prophets ministered to the people of Israel in the 8th century BC around 735 to 700 BC during the reigns of kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.
So the northern and southern kingdoms, they had split many years before this. And they were both violating the covenant that they had made with the God of Israel.
So Micah warning that God would allow the empire of Assyria to ransack the north and ravage Jerusalem.
[1:46] And after that, Babylon would bring even more destruction. So like all the prophets, Micah spoke on God's behalf to accuse Israel.

Or as he puts it in chapter 3, describing his anointing, describing his calling. So most of Micah's prophecy is taken up with accusations and warning of God's impending judgments on Israel.
But in amongst the bad news, there's good news. Micah also had a message of hope that told the people of the restoration that God would one day bring about.
So Micah is calling out Israel's leaders. He says that they have become wealthy through theft and greed. And even Israel's prophets have become corrupt.
They are quite happy to offer promises of God's protection to anyone who can pay them. So as a result, Micah tells them that God has withdrawn his protection from Israel.
[3:09] And in chapters 3 and 4, Micah describes in a second set of accusations the depth of the corruption in the land. The leaders and the prophets are working together.

They're running the land with bribes. They're twisting the law to favor the wealthy, depriving the poor of their land, their security, and eventually their hope.
So this is a clear violation of the laws of the Torah, the laws of Moses. The laws of Moses declared that it was illegal to sell land belonging to families, including poor ones.
So God's judgment will come in the form of oppressors overthrowing the northern kingdom, Jerusalem, and their temple. So at the end of chapter 3, God's judgment is clearly defined.
Chapter 3, verse 12. Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be ploughed as a field. Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the Lord a wooded height.
[4:21] The temple hill, a mound overgrown with thorns and thickets. So impending judgment and destruction of Jerusalem at the end of chapter 3 shifts to a message of hope and restoration in chapter 4.

Chapter 4, the first five verses, is a prophecy about a future era of universal peace, spiritual renewal, and God's ultimate reign.
Chapter 4, verse 4 speaks of freedom from ignorance, from war, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. But they shall sit every man 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.
But it's verse 3 that I would like to look at in particular. And the NIV rendering of verse 3 is, Now it's a wonderful prospect.
We think of people like Jadil Kushner and Steve Woodcoff struggling to make meaningful arbitration and mediation in the Ukraine and in the Middle East.

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[6:06] But when God's kingdom is fully implemented, fully fulfilled, God himself intervenes impartially, completely fairly, resolving conflicts among powerful nations without war.

So let's remind ourselves how sin and death and war and trouble and strife came into the world. The rebellions.
The rebellions. Mankind's rebellion against God's rule over our lives. Psalm 89, verses 6 and 7. For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord?
Who among the heavenly beings, the sons of God, is like the Lord? A God greatly to be feared in the counsel of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him.
So the sons of God are mentioned in Psalm 82, verse 6. But Jesus is the unique Son of God. He is God.
[7:19] Other sons of God are not. So this sonship language alludes to God deciding a family. In Job chapter 38, God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind.

And he says, Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? And the idea of the earth becoming God's dwelling place through the construction of a holy temple city is expected before the fall of man.
So to be human. So to be human. To be human is to bear the image of God. To be made in the image of God is to be given regal status. And as God's vice regents, humans were to extend his authority over the whole earth, ensuring its sanity, its sacredness, so that it is fit for God to dwell in.
So Adam was to expand the kingdom of heaven on the earth. Now God shared the attribute of freedom or free will with his created beings.
And they rebelled. Job chapter 15. Eliphaz speaks to Job. And he says, What is man that he can be pure?
[8:48] Or he that is born of a woman that he can be righteous? Behold, God puts no trust even in his holy ones. And all in the heavens are not pure in his sight.

So these sons of God, sons with a small s, these sons of God represent God in the unseen world. And Isaiah chapter 14 verse 12 tells us about rebellion in the divine council. One of the sons of God, Lucifer, the son of the morning, seeks to exalt himself above the other sons of God and make himself like the most high.
So in the guise of the serpent, the fallen angel brings rebellion against God into the earthly realm. So death enters God's creation because of the sin of our first parents.
Now, Genesis chapter 6 tells us about the second rebellion against God, where the boundaries between heaven and earth were transgressed.
[10:01] So the sons of God became attracted to the daughters of men and had children with them. So these sons of God are referred to as watchers in the books of Enoch.

The books of Enoch, they're second temple literature. They're not in the canon of scripture. But early church fathers like Tertullian and Irenaeus, they thought that the books of Enoch should be in the canon of scripture.
But it's clear that New Testament writers like Jude and Peter not only read these books, but were influenced by them in their writings.
So from this forbidden union, Nephilim were born, giants, the offspring of angels and humans. And after the death of these giants, demonic spirits came forth from their physical bodies.
So these are what the Bible refers to as the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown, the fallen angels or watchers.
[11:16] Now, these fallen angels or watchers, they corrupted humanity by introducing methods of warfare. It was a watcher called Asacel that taught warfare.

Teaching men to fashion swords and shields and knives and breastplates, other watchers taught the arts of seduction and vanity, introduced cosmetics, also drugs and sorcery, the cutting of roots and plants, some for medicine, but also others for enchantments, spells and sorcery.
Genesis chapter 6, verse 5, The law saw that the wickedness of humans was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.
So, then God destroyed the world by a flood. So the third rebellion took place after the flood, took place at Babel.
Babel, or as it could be translated Babylon, is the archetypal godless city. And while Adam and Eve aspired to become like gods in Genesis 3, the inhabitants of Babel seek to establish themselves as supreme, not only on the earth but in heaven as well.

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[12:57] And this is the first expression of secularism, secularism on the earth, the flaunting of power and wealth. They tried to build a tower that will link to the cosmos.

And as they were going up, what happened? God came down and confused their language, and the people were displaced all over the earth.
So, Genesis 10 is referred to as the table of the nations, because Noah's sons began building families who create the nations of the world.
In Deuteronomy chapter 32, verses 8 and 9, Moses gives us his Israelite worldview. He described events that point to what happened at the Tower of Babel.
Deuteronomy 32, verse 8, So God divorced the nations, but he raised up a people for himself.
[14:23] And shortly after this event, God made a covenant with Abraham. Deuteronomy 32, verse 9, But the Lord's portion is his people.

Jacob has allotted heritage. So, members of the divine council ruled the other nations. God divided mankind into nations, and the number of the nations was equivalent to the number of the sons of God.
So, each of the lesser gods received a nation as their heritage, and accordingly each nation received its guardian deity. So, the rebellion at the Tower of Babel is a rejection of God's sovereignty.
But the rebellion is a twin rebellion, because members of the divine council created spiritual beings no longer wish to represent God's authority, but they desire to become gods themselves.
And they achieve this by deceiving humans into worshipping them, the hosts of heaven. This is mentioned in Deuteronomy 4 and Deuteronomy 17.
[15:38] And after the confusion of Babel, God disperses the people into different nations all over the earth, and at the same time scatters the rebels of the divine council, so that the nations are handed over to spiritual rulers.

So, the net result is that human rebels who have their own ideas about what is good and what is evil become further corrupted by the worship of spiritual rebels, the idol gods of money, sex, and military power.
So, the real enemies of justice and righteousness are not the human rulers of the nations, but the spiritual powers that animate, that bring to life our cultural idols that inspire hatred, division, and violence.
And despite all the impending violence and destruction in Micah's day, the prophet, he never lost faith for the future.
And his vision saw a time when the weapons of warfare would be turned into agricultural implements and people would live in peaceful communities.
[17:05] So, 700 years later, Jesus was born into an occupied land, and he lived and he died in that land.

And the Jews were waiting for their long-expected king, the Messiah. But they expected a warrior king who would raise a great army.
And this army would defeat the Romans, and the invaders would be overthrown, and they would be driven out of Palestine, and the fortunes of Israel would be restored.
The Jews would again be a mighty economic and military power, as they were in the days of David and Solomon. People were expecting a territorial kingdom, not an ethereal kingdom, not a spiritual kingdom.
But peace was not on the agenda in these New Testament times. Jesus came and taught peace to his followers.
[18:20] He said, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. So, the scribes and the Pharisees and religious leaders of the Jews, they didn't like Jesus' teaching because it exposed their hypocrisy, their false views of God, and the false views they had of the nature of God's laws.

So, they were concerned, and they were envious of Jesus' popularity, and they feared that they would lose their standing and their authority with the people.
So, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, was worried that any rioting and unrest in Judea would reflect badly on him.
And so, he concurred with the death sentence that the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, had imposed on Jesus. So, Jesus, the light of the world, died for us in an act of the darkest cruelty and violence,

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the cursed death of the cross.
But three days later, as the Son of God, in great power, he rose from the dead. So, in Jesus' death and resurrection, not only did that cancel out the debt of our sins, paid the price for the sins of all the people that will be with the Lord in glory throughout the endless ages of eternity, but also in Jesus' death and resurrection.
[20:05] As Paul tells the church in Colossae in chapter 2, Jesus, in his death and resurrection, he disarmed the rulers and authorities, the principalities and powers, the rulers of the nations, and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in the cross.

So, at the cross of Calvary, Jesus confronted all these rebel powers and authorities, and he condemned our evil by allowing the rebels to unleash all their hate and evil on him.
And by the power of Christ's love and his resurrection, the evil forces of the cosmos were overcome. And in the finished work of Christ, there is a demise in the authority of the gods of the nations.
The legal rights of the principalities and powers have been removed by Christ's work, and the covenant that God made with Abraham has been fulfilled.
When God made his covenant with Abraham, part of what he said was, in you, in you, in Abraham, in Abraham's family, in Abraham's seed, in Abraham's descendants, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.
[21:33] So, Christ is the offspring of Abraham. As Paul tells us in Galatians chapter 3. So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentile nations, so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

So, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit was poured out on the earth. And the confusion of Babel was reversed.
First, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, there were devout men from every nation under heaven. And they could all understand the glorious gospel preached by the apostles in their own language.
So, Pentecost is a slap in the face for the gods of the nations. And as the Spirit enables and empowers the apostles to become witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth, although defeated, these rulers and authorities, they are still around in various forms and are particularly active wherever and whenever anyone stands to prosper from opposing the God-given dignity and humanity of others.
So, the kingdom of God is already here, but it's not yet fulfilled. The kingdom of God is in the heart of each and every believer. But the kingdom of God has not yet fully come.
[23:24] It's not yet fulfilled. Certain things have to happen before the Lord comes back in great power. The gospel must be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

And when the Lord comes back, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. Eden will be restored and heaven and earth will overlap and the earth becomes a paradise.
And the final defeat of... And then we will see the final defeat of Satan and of sin and of death. And the frail bodies of believers will become glorious resurrection bodies.
1 Corinthians 15, verse 24. Then comes the end, when he, Christ, delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.
For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Isaiah 24, verse 21. On that day, the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven and the kings of the earth on the earth.
[24:46] They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit. They will be shut up in a prison and after many days they will be punished. So these are the end times that Micah refers to.

The day of the Lord. The final fulfillment of God's kingdom. So, how are we to live as Christians? Until the Lord comes back or until we go to be with him in glory? So probably the most well-known verse in the book of Micah is in chapter 6, verse 8.
So he has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to act justly, to treat others fairly, to stand up against the exploitation of the poor or the vulnerable. The Lord requires of us to do justice and also to love mercy, to love kindness, to show compassion and grace to people around us, not being bitter or indifferent to them.
[25:58] To do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Being aware of how dependent we are on God.

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Being aware of that cancels out any self-importance. The writer of the Hebrews says, Strive, he says. Strive.
Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness, the Christ-likeness without which no one will see the Lord.
Paul says to the Romans in chapter 12, If it is possible, if it is possible, as far as it depends on you, you live peaceably with all. So peace is a most valuable asset for any community.
It's scarce. It's highly sought after. And it's fragile. And it comes from trust and patience and tolerance and faith.
[27:01] and it results from mutual agreement and understanding. And peace has never been easy to achieve.

It takes hard work to establish and keep the peace at any level in our society. But we must all strive for peace. What Micah foresaw, what Jesus taught us, the driving force for peace, must come from us.
It must come from our remembrance of those who have given their lives in war. Peace takes work and commitment through our vigilance, our voice, and our prayers.
Peace will come to light triumphant. So, the poppy is our symbol of remembrance.
So, let us remember through the remembering of pain and loss and suffering that there is always the light of love, hope, and faith through Jesus Christ.
[28:17] Amen. May God bless these few thoughts to us. We pray again. Heavenly Father, we give thanks for your word to us.

We pray that you would help us all to see that we must be found leaning on the beloved Son for everything that is in this life and everything in the world that is to come.
And Lord, help us to strive for peace and Lord, help us to remember that Jesus is the only way. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Neither is the salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved.
And in Jesus' name and for his sake, we pray. Amen. We'll conclude the service by singing Psalm 103 in the Scottish Psalter.
[29:20] Psalm 103 verse 12 to 18. As far as east is distant from the west so far as he for must remove it in his love all our iniquity.

Verse 18. To such as keep his covenant and mindful are always of his most just commandments that they may them obey. Psalm 103 6 dances verses 12 to 18.
To God's praise. Stand to sing. As far as east is distant from the west so far hath he from us removed in his love all our iniquity.
Such pity as a father hath unto his children dear.
fear. Like pity shows the Lord to such us worship him in fear.
[30:54] For he remembers we are dust and he our frame well knows.

Real man his days are like the grass as far in fields he grows.
For over it the wind doth pass and it away is gone and of the place where once it was it shall no more be known but unto them that do him fear God's mercy never end and to their children still his righteousness extends to such as keep his covenant and mindful are all way of his most just commandments that they may them obey and may the
God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant equip you with everything good that you may do his will working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ and the blessing of almighty God God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you all this day and forever more Amen

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