



Look. Wait. Trust. Repeat! (Micah 7:1-7)

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I have a love-hate relationship with reading or watching the news. I love it because I enjoy understanding and analyzing current events and the people who are shaping them. I like knowing what is going on in Washington or Paris or Hong Kong.

Flipping through a hard copy of the daily paper has been part of my routine since I was a young child. I have fond memories of my dad coming home from work and asking me over dinner to tell him something I learned in the news. It's a discipline I hope to pass on to my boys. I want them to be men who are not preoccupied with their own story, but live with the humility of knowing they are part of a much bigger story of all God is doing in the world. Those are a few reasons why I enjoy the news.

But I could give you just as many reasons why I dislike it. One of my friends in our Community Group said it well last week. She said, "I'm not sure man was meant to carry the cumulative weight of the world's sorrows." I think she's right. Our finite emotional capacity cannot grieve all that is wrong, all at once, all the time.

Besides, what sort of stories constitute the overwhelming majority of what makes the news? It's all the things that are going wrong. Problems. Troubles. Scandals. Looming dangers. Add to the pessimistic slant the fact that a lot of news is reported with a significant helping of indignation. "Something's wrong and it shouldn't be this way! Someone's at fault! Someone needs to be fired! Heads should roll!"

And we wonder why our news consumption leaves us riddled with anxiety, simmering anger, and a deep hopelessness! More than one member of our church told me in 2020 that they had to stop watching or reading the news because it consistently gutted their joy in Jesus.

The local and national news in Micah's day was even more dire. Assyria is on its way. Babylon approaching. Divine judgment unavoidable. Exile was imminent on account of Israel's spiritual adultery and social injustice. The land was ripe with wickedness. Wherever Micah looked, ungodliness abounded. Does our world feel like that to you? Does our nation? How about your workplace, or your school, or your family?

The first half of Micah 7 begs an important question. How do we live in a godless society? Can anything keep us from losing heart or slipping into despair when we feel hemmed in by wickedness? Do we try and pretend the world isn't so bad after all? Do we form a Christian bubble and try to create heaven on earth? Friends, Micah 7:1-7 urges us to embrace a far better response. **Allow the faithlessness of men to drive you into the arms of a faithful God.**

Micah wasn't ignorant. He was fully informed. Fully aware of all the rampant wickedness all around him. Yet he didn't succumb to bitterness or despair. Why not? Because the faithlessness of men drove him into the arms of a faithful God. There are two things we must do to follow his example.

1) GRIEVE THE LACK OF GODLINESS (vv. 1-4)

On the heels of the judgment the Lord pronounces against Israel at the end of Ch. 6, it's remarkable Micah doesn't personally respond with, "Serves you right!" Or, "You guys had it coming to you!" Or, "Woe to you!" Given the Lord was about to punish the nation on account of their unrepentant disobedience. "Woe to you" would have been entirely accurate!

But what does he say? How does he engage with the prevalence of wickedness at an emotional level? V. 1, "Woe is me!" It's a cry of personal sorrow. A cry of grief. A lament of desire unfulfilled. "For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned; there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires." He compares his emotional state to a hungry or starving man approaching an orchard or vineyard who finds no fruit and is absolutely gutted.

What kind of fruit does he long for? What sort of hope deferred is making his heart sick? V. 2, "The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind." The word we translate as "godly" is closely related to the word we translate in Micah 6:8 as "kindness" or "steadfast love." It speaks of covenant faithfulness, loyal love toward God and neighbor. As Alec Motyer observes, the "godly" are "those God loves with an unchanging love and who love him back" in return.

In a similar way, “upright” describes a righteous man or woman who lives with moral integrity. They are honest and honorable in all they do. They are not perfect, but they are running hard after Jesus. Micah grieves the fact that such people are nowhere to be found. They have practically disappeared from the land of Israel. The fruit of godliness and uprightness is gone.

God expects his people in every age to bear spiritual fruit in the form of thoughts, words, and deeds that are pleasing to him. Isa 5:7, “For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!” It’s why Jesus declares to his disciples in Jn 15:16, “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.” And Paul declares in Gal 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

A Christian is, by definition, a man or woman who is united by faith to the Son of God, has their heart transformed by the Spirit, and lives a new life of submission to the Father as a result. And that’s exactly the sort of person Micah says is nowhere to be found. Everywhere he looks, he sees nothing but spiritual barrenness. And it breaks his heart!

Why? Because he longs, he earnestly desires for men and women created in God’s image to live in glad obedience to their Creator. His emotional appetite is not limited to material comfort, convenience, or security. The godlessness around him is more than “unfortunate” or “too bad” as far as Micah is concerned. It’s deeply distressing. It grieves his soul, because he hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for Israel to be who God created her to be, and for the Lord to receive the worship he deserves.

Is that your response to ungodliness around you, friend? Do you share the prophets acute longing for godliness to abound in your home, in our community, in our nation? Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? For Jesus to be honored? Or as long as your individual life is relatively free from suffering, could you care less about how the people around you are living?

The holiness and purity our body, this church, is not my exclusive responsibility as a pastor. It’s our collective responsibility. It’s your responsibility, brothers and sisters.



That's Paul's entire point in 1 Cor 5 when he admonishes an entire local church to guard and protect their corporate holiness as a necessary witness to the life-changing power of the gospel! Paul knows it's so easy to show up on Sunday, enjoy the service, go home, and take no real spiritual responsibility for anyone around you.

When was the last time you prayed for a fellow church member, asking the Lord to help them fight for godliness in a specific area of their life? It starts with investing enough time in friendship and conversation so that you know where the battle lies, doesn't it! When a brother or sister in our midst is struggling with sin or falling into sin, it should grieve your soul and compel you to speak up, to do all you can to help them grow and change.

Let's be a church family that so longs to see Christ exalted through our corporate holiness that we are compelled to pray the way Paul prayed for the Philippians. "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil 1:9-11).

When we desire what God desires, we will grieve what God grieves. If you long for Christ to be magnified through the godliness of all who bear his image and see nothing but wickedness, godly sorrow will fill your heart. If godlessness is what you see when you look at your co-workers, your friends, your spouse, or your children, it should be distressing. It should sadden you. If it doesn't, you can safely assume something other than love for God and his people has usurped the throne of your heart.

Micah laments the godlessness around him in detail in vv. 2-4. "The all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net." As Leslie Allen says, "self-centered ruthlessness" has become the cultural norm. The people around Micah are plotting and planning for opportunities to take advantage of their neighbor for selfish gain. V. 3, "Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well." How drunk can we get? How high can we go? How many sexual exploits can we achieve? How much money can we accumulate for ourselves?

And the very people to whom God entrusted a unique responsibility for upholding godliness in the land are denigrating it! “The prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul.” And instead of community serving as a source of hope and help, a source of spiritual encouragement in the fight for holiness, it’s become a means of multiplying wickedness. V. 3, “Thus they weave it together.”

We’re not talking about accidental sin. Israel is knowingly, willfully, deliberately, and repeatedly perverting what God has said is good and right. The least evil among Micah’s countryman is “like a brier” (v. 4) or a “thorn hedge.” He sees more than the absence of good fruit. He sees the widespread presence of enmity and oppression. Anyone who gets close is scratched, impaled, and crushed. Does your relationship with your co-worker feel like that? Or your child? Maybe it’s your spouse.

Micah concludes the first half of his lament in v. 4 by reminding Israel Yahweh will not allow the guilty to go unpunished. The justice she failed to uphold Yahweh will perfectly uphold. The judgment of siege and exile are imminent! Friend, the same is true for all today who fail to bow their knee to Jesus’ rightful authority and persist in unrepentant sin against God and man. The Lord will hold them accountable, even if we must wait until the final day to see it. He shares your grief and will avenge the wrong they have done.

There is tremendous comfort in knowing moral evil will not go unpunished. We mourn with hope. And yet we mourn. Why? Because a biblical response to ungodliness begins with godward cry of lament.

2) HOPE IN THE GOD OF OUR SALVATION (vv. 5-7)

When the world out there feels so dark and filled with evil, the support and care of godly friends and family members is an incredible gift. But in Micah’s day, even that blessing had been stripped away. People we want to trust and should be able to trust – neighbors, friends, spouses, children – proved to be just as faithless as everyone else. “Put no trust’ in them,” Micah says at the beginning of v. 5. Why not? V. 6. Because “a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”

Some of you know exactly what he’s talking about. The spouse you thought you could trust? The child you thought you could trust? The friend you never thought

would turn their back on you? Vv. 5-6 describe a situation where relationships that should be secure and life-giving have completely broken down, both in society at large (friends and neighbors) and the family in particular (fathers and sons or mothers and daughters). The enmity of sin is especially painful when it hits close to home.

So when it feels like the godly are nowhere to be found, that all the people around you that you thought you would be able to trust have turned against you, what do the people of God do? What should you do? The same thing Micah does in v. 7. We allow the faithlessness of men to drive us into the arms of a faithful God. “But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” I’ll summarize it in four words: Look. Wait. Trust. (Repeat!)

A) Look

“But as for me, I will look to the LORD...” The word for “look” in v. 7 has the same verbal root as the word “watchmen” in v. 4. Micah isn’t describing a casual glance. He’s talking about keeping watch. He’s describing a deliberate and careful gaze. In the midst of human faithlessness and ungodliness, we look to the Lord by deliberately and carefully focusing the attention our heart on our ever-faithful God.

The word for LORD in v. 7 is capitalized because it translates the Hebrew word Yahweh. It’s the name by which God made himself known to the people of Israel. It’s his covenant name. Micah reminds us the Lord with whom we have to do is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping kind of God who has never forsaken those who seek him.

When we’re surrounded by ungodliness, especially in our own home, we feel in a new way just how much we’re not in control of what other people say, think, or do, including the way they choose to relate to us. But remember this, friend. Even your fiercest enemies cannot control where you look. They can shout and rage and holler and clamor till kingdom come! But you still get to decide who will get your first and best of your attention.

Who are you meditating on? Who are you focusing on, thinking about, and pondering? If you fix your gaze on an unfaithful man or woman, on the person who betrayed you, you will inevitably become mired in despair and bitterness. There’s



only one life-giving alternative. Look to the Lord – meditate on our faithful God, the Righteous God, who always keeps his promises

Looking to the Lord can be as simple as opening a Bible and beginning to read, or pouring out your soul to God in prayer, or saying help to God by saying help to a wise Christian friend. And if you find your mind wandering, drifting back to what they did or they said or they're doing during the very moment you're trying to look to the Lord, try writing Scripture, or writing your prayers, or praying with someone else, or singing along with a recording of one of the songs we sing on Sunday morning.

And when your mind keeps drifting back to other things like my own, remember what a wise pastor-friend of mine once said. "Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly!" Struggling to look to the Lord is infinitely preferable to not looking to the Lord at all. So keep fighting. Keep looking. Don't stop turning to him! The Holy Spirit will help you walk in the good of Ps 123:1-2.

"To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us."

B) Wait

Look back at v. 7. "But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation." When we look to the Lord, what do we see? Isa 64:4, "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him." That's what we see!

So why does he make us wait for his salvation? Why not immediately restore the godly to the land, or make every broken relationship right, or make faithless men faithful? Because God isn't a vending machine. He's a wise and loving King.

We are not omniscient, friends. The facts we do see threaten to sabotage our faith and fill our hearts with fear. But we do not know all the facts. The wait is by divine design because it reminds us God is God and we are not. He wants what is best. He knows what is best. And he has all the power necessary to bring it to pass.

And his salvation, his life-changing, heart-transforming, justice-prevailing, sorrow removing, evil-overcoming intervention in the lives of men is worth waiting for, brother and sisters, for at least two reasons. First, because no one else can do what the Lord can do. He alone is God! Second, because he has proven his commitment to our good once and for all by laying down his life on the cross. The love he demonstrated there enables us to trust his heart even when we can't see his hand.

Here's the key question. When you feel the sting of ungodliness, are you willing to wait, my friend – not for the outcome that makes the most sense to you, but for God? Waiting for “the God of my salvation” is very different than waiting for God to deliver my chosen or preferred form of salvation in a circumstantial sense.

The good news of Micah 7 is that God doesn't just traffic in salvation, dabble in salvation, or deliver salvation. He is your salvation! He is our hope, joy, peace, comfort, life, deliverance, assurance, fortress, rock, redeemer, savior, and king! So be honest. If there's a particular person you long to see grow in godliness, are you humbly waiting for God or arrogantly putting him on notice? Humble waiting doesn't give God a timeline or dictate the terms of the contract as if we are God and he is not.

We keep bringing our requests to him. We reject the laziness of spiritual passivity or resignation. But we also remember only God can make the godless godly, the faithless faithful, or turn sinners into saints. All good things come from him! Only the Lord can build a strong marriage, a healthy church, an enduring friendship, or turn the hearts of children to their fathers.

So we look to the Lord and wait with anticipation for God to work salvation for our good and his glory. Ps 62:5–6, For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.”

3) Trust

The heart attitude of faith Micah expresses in the last phrase of v. 7 is critical. “I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” Faith makes theology personal. Faith takes sound doctrine, the truth about God, off the



shelf and owns it in the depths of our heart. "The God" in the middle of the verse becomes "my God" at the end because of Micah's informed reliance on the Lord.

In other words, he isn't just waiting. He's trusting God in the wait. He's leaning the weight of his unfulfilled desires on God in the wait. He's resting in the promise of Ps 145:19, "He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them."

Christian, when you pray, the Lord is listening for Jesus' sake. He always hears you for Jesus' sake. Not because you've held up your end of the bargain. Not because you've been good lately. Because the Savior you trust is even now interceding for you, eternally pleading the merit of his blood on your behalf! Because he secures 24-7 access to the throne of grace!

What a comfort it is to know at all times, in every situation, no matter what's going on or how long we've been waiting, the Lord always hears! And his hearing is not a passive in-one-ear-and-out-the-other. It's a hearing with an oath-bound, blood-sealed promise to act! So we look. We wait. And we trust. We hope in the God of our salvation. It's not a one and done. It's a pattern of life - a way of relating to the Lord again and again.

Even the godliest of men and women will eventually disappoint you. Why? Because they're not the Messiah! They're not the Unchanging One! They are weak like you. A sinner like you. They can't save you. They too need a Savior. In other words, there's a sense in which we don't ultimately invest our trust even in godly neighbors, friends, spouses, sons, or parents. We trust the Lord! And we keep on looking, waiting, and trusting until the day he returns to make all things new.

CONCLUSION

Look. Wait. Trust. Repeat! That's a fantastic four-word description of the Christian life! And it's exactly how we must live as the people of God in a world that has rejected him, whether that world is "out there" or sleeping in the bed next to you. We don't pretend the world isn't so bad after all. We don't create a Christian bubble. We don't surrender to bitterness or despair. **We allow the faithlessness of men to drive us into the arms of a faithful God.**



Do that right now, friend. Grieve the painful lack of godliness around you and within you. But don't stop there. Hope in the God of your salvation. For he has never forsaken those who seek him. You will not be the exception to the rule. He's waiting. He's eager. He's listening. He's strong to save. Look. Wait. Trust. Repeat.