

Trust His Promises (Micah 4:9-5:15)

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On Easter Sunday we celebrate in a particular way that Jesus, God the Son Incarnate, is not dead. He's risen. He's not languishing in a tomb. He's alive! The songs we sing, the sermons we hear, the Scriptures we read resonate with themes of victory, power, joy, and dominion. The resurrection of our Lord is a promise of fresh starts, new beginnings, and life out of death for all who are in Christ Jesus. Because he lives, we too shall live.

But all that talk of victory and joy can ring strangely hollow if that's not the way your life feels right now. It sounds so amazing. And it can be like watching a fairytale from a million miles away. Friends, life for the people who first heard and read Micah 4:9-5:15 did not feel like a carefree Easter Sunday.

We're in the middle of an 8-week study of Micah entitled, "A God of Justice + Mercy." If you were with us last Sunday, you know Micah 4:9 picks up on the heels of quite the contrast. It's a contrast between the social injustice and imminent judgment the people of God are experiencing in Ch. 3 on account of their spiritual adultery, and the glorious vision in Ch. 4 of what life will be like when the Lord makes all things new.

Imagine what the original recipients of Micah's prophecy in the 8th century BC must have felt, especially the faithful remnant in Israel. How they longed with all their heart for the blessings of Micah 4 to come to pass, to know the joy of being God's people, in God's place, under God's rule - no more sin, no more suffering, no more death! The vision sounds amazing, Micah. But we're not there yet. We're a mess. And you just told us the blessings in Micah 4:1-8 won't come to pass until "the latter days."

So how are we going to get from here to there? And what should we do here and now as we're suffering? As we're waiting? What Micah tells them in the rest of chapters 4 and 5 is exactly what we need to hear. **Experiencing God's salvation is a matter of trusting God's promises.** That's how we're going to get from here to there, despite all that's going on right now.

The word “now” is a key word in the passage. Micah uses it to set up three contrasts between the distress Israel is about to experience and the deliverance the Lord will work on her behalf. Snapshots of suffering are followed with tangible promises of mercy.

Every contrast reveals a promise about God’s salvation they needed to trust, a promise we need to trust. And they’re followed by two additional promises about the result of God’s intervention on behalf of his people. Hence the five points in this sermon! **Experiencing God’s salvation, then and now, is a matter of trusting his promises.**

1) THE LORD SAVES AT THE POINT OF OUR GREATEST DISTRESS (4:9-10)

Micah begins in v. 9 with biting sarcasm. “Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished?” He’s describing the coming day when the armies of Babylon would dethrone the king of Judah, exposing the folly of trusting in human leaders instead of in the Lord. “Writhe and groan” on that day, Micah says. Why? Because grief is an appropriate response to the sorrow of sin.

V. 10, “For now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon.” When Micah spoke those words, Assyria was still the dominant military power. But the Lord knows the end from the beginning, and he revealed to Micah the suffering Judah would experience centuries before it came to pass. The punishment of exile in Babylon is guaranteed.

Even those frightening words contain a seed of hope. The sorrow we experience on account of our sin in Babylon isn’t a surprise to the Lord. In his perfect justice and gracious discipline, he has ordained that too, friend. No part of our life, self-inflicted sorrows included, escape his sovereign hand. Remember that.

And notice what the Lord says will happen in Babylon. V. 10, “There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.” Micah doesn’t repeat the word “there” by accident. The Lord’s making a profoundly important promise! My redeeming work in your life will be as specific as your troubles.

Israel, I do not traffic in generic rescues. My salvation is perfectly suited to the exact conditions, the exact place and time of your trouble. It will come to pass in the very place where you feel most forsaken, most abandoned, most forgotten by me. You're going to wail in grief at what you have lost and so you should. But when you do, trust my word of promise. Salvation begins in Babylon.

Do you believe that, friend? Are there spaces in your life, whether actual or potential, where you think, "Man, if I go there, if I fall there, if I stumble there, the hole's too deep. Game over. I don't think even God himself can deliver me out of this one. After all, I brought it on myself. It's my own fault. The lies. The selfishness. The pornography. The bitterness.

Friend, salvation begins in Babylon – not a hundred miles outside the city after Israel took the first steps toward home. In Babylon. At her lowest point. In her darkest hour. Why? Because the Lord delights to save at the point of our greatest distress.

2) THE LORD SAVES TO THE SURPRISE OF OUR ENEMIES (4:11-13)

The second contrast is found in vv. 11-13. Like the first one, it too begins with a "now." A present sorrow. "Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, 'Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.'" Micah's describing Israel's enemies as gloating over her downfall, delighting in her shame, feasting their greedy eyes on the nakedness of her spoiled fields and ravaged cities. They perceived her as completely helpless. Utterly abandoned.

Have you ever done something wrong and felt like the people around you responded by piling on? Kicking you while you were down? Rubbing your face in the dirt? Maybe you started the trouble. But now they're troubling your trouble. The mocking voices around you, echoing in the corners of your mind, won't stop.

Maybe you're in a marriage where you've been far from perfect and now your husband is abusing you. Or you started hanging out with a rough crowd and they took advantage of you. Part of the confusion and mental anguish in situations like that comes from knowing we're not an innocent angel. But that doesn't change the fact that real people have committed acts of moral evil against you for which they are responsible, not you.

The nations surrounding Israel, Assyria and Babylon included, committed horrific atrocities against the people of God. And God doesn't turn a blind eye to a single one! He doesn't say, "You've made your bed; now lie in it." No. He holds Israel's enemies accountable for their actions no less than Israel.

To the assembled enemies of his people in every age, to the cultural voices of persecution that mock the church and retweet every scandal, the Lord of Hosts declares in v. 12, "But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor."

The pagan peoples around Judah didn't have a biblical theology of suffering, a theology of the cross. In their minds, the fate of a nation reflected the nature of their god. Either Yahweh is weak, or he's "done" with his people. Why else would they be so sorely afflicted? We must be favored. They must be despised.

There are two realities the enemies of God's people in every age fail to understand. **First**, their own accountability before their Creator. **Second**, the overcoming power of God's mercy. How could God still be for Israel if he's allowing her to suffer? Because the story of the Lord's discipline in our lives is Jesus' story. It looks like defeat. It looks like God has forever withdrawn his favor. Could anything appear darker or more hopeless than death on a cross, than the King of Glory laid in a tomb?

But that's not how Jesus' story ended, and it's not how the story of God's people ends either! Suffering is the road to glory. The cross culminates in the resurrection. Sin and its consequences do not have the final word. V. 13, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many people; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth."

When the Lord saves you to the surprise of your enemies, Christian, you will not gloat in their downfall as they once gloated in yours. Rather, when the Righteous Judge of all the earth vindicates you, the result will be trembling awe as you take the crown of favor and honor he bestows and cast it at his feet in humble worship.

Enemies in every age desire to thresh the people of God. The Lord promises his people will tread them down – not because we deserve it, but on account of the greatness of his mercy. Ps 37:34, “Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.” The Lord saves to the surprise of his enemies.

3) THE LORD SAVES THROUGH HIS CHOSEN MESSIAH (5:1-6)

The final contrast begins in Micah 5:1. “Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us...” Israel faced a literal siege when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 587BC. It’s a picture of the forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil arrayed against God’s people in every age.

Human rulers in Israel’s day offered no refuge. V. 1, “...with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek.” Her kings were about to be utterly humiliated in the exile. Yet the Lord directs Micah’s gaze to a future beyond exile, to an exceedingly precious promise! V. 2, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel...”

The city of Bethlehem was so small it didn’t even make the list of more than 100 cities given to the tribe of Judah in Joshua 15! It was easy to overlook, no less than a young man named David when the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king of Israel. And the Lord made a covenant with King David, a promise affirmed in Ps 89:35, “Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.”

So the Jewish people waited. They waited for Yahweh to raise up a Messiah in the line of David, an anointed ruler who would fulfill the promise God made “from of old, from ancient days.” God’s saving purposes are delightfully stubborn, my friends. No matter how long we must wait, they never fail to come to pass. Seven-hundred years later, God kept his promise.

Matt 2:4-6, “Assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, [Herod] inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘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.” God delights to use what is small and of no account to accomplish his saving purposes, children included.

Micah 5:4, “Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth.” Long after a remnant returned from exile, Israel remained subject or “given up” to foreign kings. In the 1st century AD, it was the Romans. It’s why so many of Jesus’ followers expected him to start a civil uprising. If you’re the Messiah, isn’t it your job to deliver us?

But all those human enemies, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, were mere echoes of the works and effects of a far greater enemy. An enemy who has been oppressing God’s people from the very beginning – Satan himself, and the enslaving power of sin and death he introduced into the world. That’s the enemy, that’s the deadly siege that’s ultimately in view in Micah 5. Men can destroy your body on earth. Sin will destroy your soul in hell.

So in the fullness of time, at just the right time, God sent forth his Son. Jesus came to deliver us from our greatest enemy and in the process to guarantee our future deliverance from all our other enemies! He came as one who was **fully human** to gather “his brothers,” to bring the wayward sinners like us home to God. That’s the promise of v. 3. And he came as one who was **fully God** to grant us eternal security and peace as the Perfect Shepherd Israel’s best kings failed to be. That’s the promise of v. 4.

How do we know that’s true? Because Jesus is the Savior who STANDS. Micah 5:4, “And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.” Jesus perfectly obeyed God as the only faithful Son, living the life we cannot live. He died on the cross to pay the full penalty for our sin, dying the death we deserved to die. And he rose from the grave confirming the infinite worth of his sacrifice more than exceeded the immeasurable debt of our sin!

He’s not lying in a tomb somewhere leaving us to wonder if his cross-work was sufficient to bring us home to the Father and secure eternal life with him. No. After three days, he walked out of the tomb under his own power because he’s the Savior



who stands! He stands by the authority of God. He stands in the power of God. He stands with the glory of God. Why? Because Jesus is God!

So how do we know we really are secure in Christ? How do we know we have perfect peace in Christ? The “for” in the middle of v. 4 reveals both the ground of the security and the ground of our peace. “For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.”

It's the greatness of Jesus, friend, displayed in his triumph over the grave, that enables him to offer you a **SECURITY** men cannot give, and a **PEACE** money cannot buy. The security of knowing it is well with your soul and nothing can separate you from his love! The peace of knowing you have been reconciled to God and can cry out to him as your Father!

If death itself could not hold him down, what enemy do we have to fear? Let men throw their very worst at you, Christian, they still cannot snatch you from the palm of his hand, from the strong arm of your Great Shepherd! There is no greater security or peace than the security and peace we have in our Risen King.

There is only one “now,” only one reality, strong enough to quiet the murmuring anxieties of all the other “now's” of life in a broken world. It's the immovable and eternal “now” of the supremacy of Christ over every other power, sin and death included. If you're longing for real security, if you're longing for real peace, look to Jesus! Trust in Jesus. Because he stands in victory we can dwell in peace and security.

When “the Assyrian comes into our land” in v. 6, when we feel the oppression of the world, our flesh, and the devil, the Lord will often bring hope and help through the ministry of his people and those who serve in his stead. The poetic image of “seven shepherds and eight princes of men” in v. 5 reflects as much. The Lord will even raise up spiritual leaders to advance his kingdom in “the land of Assyria...and the land of Nimrod.” The truth and power of the gospel will take root in even the darkest corners of the earth!

But when it does, when the Lord uses his people, under-shepherds included, to extend his redemptive rule, he is ultimately the one bringing deliverance. V. 6, “They

shall shepherd...and he shall deliver." The Lord delights to use us. But he alone can save.

4) THE LORD SAVES THAT WE MIGHT BE A BLESSING IN OUR VICTORY (5:7-9)

The second half of Micah 5 explains the divinely intended effect of the Messiah's rule. The first effect is found in vv. 7-9. Micah compares the presence of God's redeemed people in the world to **TWO THINGS**. The first is in v. 7, "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people like dew from the Lord..."

Friends, the Lord has not called us to merely hang on and wait for heaven. He has good works for us to do. He intends his church, our church, to be a blessing to the world, starting with the community in which we live. Our presence in Midlothian, your presence on the street you live, the office you work, should be "like dew" in the sense that you bring holistic nourishment and life wherever you go. Gal 6:10, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

We are blessed in Christ that we might be a blessing! The time, abilities, and resources the Lord has given you are ultimately not for you. They are for Him no less than the Messiah in v. 2 comes forth for Him. If our church disappeared tomorrow would our presence be missed? Ask the Lord to show you how you can be a tangible blessing among the "many peoples" in which he's placed you.

The second comparison Micah makes for the presence of God's redeemed people in the world is found in v. 8. "And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest..." Where does a lion fit in the animal food chain? It's at the top, right? It has no natural enemies. It enjoys victory, so to speak, over all the other animals. It doesn't have to worry about protecting itself from other predators.

No matter how much suffering we experience "among the nations," we are not powerless victims. Our identity comes from King Jesus, the Lion of Judah! Rom 8:37, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Confident in Jesus' triumph over every evil power, we lay down our life instead of trying to save our life. We live with lion-like boldness, freedom, and courage, for he

who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. The Lord saves that we might be a blessing in our victory.

5) THE LORD SAVES BY DESTROYING THE FALSE GODS WE LIKE TO TRUST (5:10-15)

In vv. 10-15, the Lord promises to cleanse his people from all the idols that got them in trouble in the first place! All the things they loved and trusted more than the Lord – horses, chariots, cities, strongholds. They looked for spiritual knowledge through sorcery and fortune telling instead of the Word of God. God promises to cut them off. They trusted in the Canaanite gods of Baal and his fertility consort Asherah to prosper their homes and fields. God promises to cut them off.

It's a sobering list to read, brothers and sisters, because we have our own. We do the exact same thing whenever we try to save ourselves by using other people or things to control our future instead of surrendering our lives to the sovereign God in whose hands are all our ways. Dale Davis is right. "Israel will have to trust Yahweh alone, for he will totally eliminate their favorite safety devices and level every cherish place of refuge."

How grateful I am that the God who saves is the God who sanctifies! He does it through the power of Spirit, who takes the gospel, the truth of the person and work of Christ, and uses it to draw our hearts away from every false refuge and bring us back to him.

Tit 2:11-13, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ..."

That's a painful process, but it's an exceedingly good process. Why? **Because experiencing God's salvation is a matter of trusting God's promises.** And we will never trust his promises if we're too busy trusting everything else.

Not all suffering is a result of your sin. But all suffering provides an opportunity for us to grow spiritually as God uses our suffering to wean us away from broken



cisterns that hold no water. Praise the Lord for his commitment to cleanse us from the inside out!

CONCLUSION

What promises does Micah 4-5 urge us to trust? It's not one or two. It's a long and glorious list. The Lord saves at the point of our greatest distress. The Lord saves to the surprise of our enemies. The Lord saves through his chosen Messiah. The Lord saves that we might be a blessing in our victory. And the Lord saves by destroying the false gods we like to trust.

The middle promise – the Messiah's redemptive rule – is the one that brings all the rest to pass. And it's the empty tomb that confronts us with the surety of God's promise again and again. May we be a people who live accordingly, who trust all the saving promises of God because the gospel gives us good reason to trust him – again and again.