

The Shepherd Has Come

Micah 5

By [Mr. Bruce Stallings](#)

December 24, 2013 – Christmas Eve Sermon 11:00 p.m.

Micah contains a passage of Scripture that we use during Christmas time. We usually pull out one brief part of Micah 5 that refers to the birth of Christ but I want to take this time to keep Micah 5 in context of what Micah the prophet was prophesying about and then look at how that relates to Christmas. Then I'd like to look at how that relates to us at Christmas as we come to the Lord's Table.

Micah 5:1–15 says

[1] Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. [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, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. [3] Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. [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. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; [6] they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border. [7] Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. [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, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. [9] Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off. [10] And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; [11] and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; [12] and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; [13] and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you,

and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; [14] and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities. [15] And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.

What on earth got God so upset? We were going along real well there. Jesus was going to Bethlehem going to shepherd His people and then all of a sudden the anger of the Lord began to burn and He began to declare to them what He was going to do to them, correct them, punish them and how He was going to declare that in anger and wrath He would execute vengeance. Micah was one of the prophets the Lord used. He prophesied during a very unique time, in Israel in the Promised Land. He prophesied to a group of people that for absolutely no reason other than the will of the Lord, they found favor in God's eyes. He showered down blessings upon blessings upon them, too many to count and He blessed them more than other people. Why would they be the ones to receive all those blessings that the Lord showered down upon them?

It wasn't long before they took those blessings for granted and it didn't take them long before they were unfaithful and disobedient before the Lord so therefore the Lord had to correct them and He put them into slavery. He used slavery in their life to humble the, to teach them to turn back to the Lord and as He used that in their life He freed them from that slavery. He didn't free them as a person or a family but freed them as a nation. He released the entire nation from slavery and led them out in an unbelievable miraculous way and making a statement throughout all the land, not of what a great people this was but what a great God He was. Then in about a 24 hour span of time they took for granted what the Lord had done and had become unfaithful with the blessings of the Lord.

They felt like they were going to be taken out in the wilderness and left all alone. The Lord led them again and blessed them again. They rejoiced and worshipped the Lord. Then they took for granted what the Lord had done and they again turned their back on Him and didn't trust Him. So He felt like He was going to have to deal with them again and so He punished them yet again and a generation died out in the wilderness while their children inherited what He had promised to them which was the Promised Land. When Micah is prophesying they are in the Promised Land but what Micah is saying to them is not what they would want to hear or what you would expect to hear and they have now learned what their forefathers have done and this cycle of unfaithfulness just keeps on continuing.

Here they find themselves yet again, a group of people who God has showered His blessing upon and they begin to turn their back on the Lord and begin to embrace the things of the earth. Micah prophesied specifically about the nation Israel but it was interesting because he actually targeted the large cities of the kingdom. He said this is where this immorality is beginning and like a volcano it spews out from those major cities and impacts the entire kingdom of God. It

impacts the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom so Micah specifically points out these particular large cities that are in the kingdom of God.

Micah points out the idol worship that they have engaged in and where they have turned their back on the Lord. They worship idols in their life. Sexual immorality is rampant and spreading throughout the cities into the countryside. They are even coming up with new forms, new ways and new ideas of sexual immorality that Micah is pointing out to them. Greed is so rampant that it is showing up primarily not because of the wealth they are assuming but they are assuming that wealth on the backs of their brothers and sisters. In other words they are taking advantage of their brothers and sisters and this greed is having a terrible impact and they don't care.

There are preachers in the nation of Israel and Micah points out that these preachers want to please people rather than God. When Micah comes along and warns them that if they don't stop God will do something about it, the preachers respond and say that's legalism. God is not going to respond to that. It's okay for you to live this way and turn your back on the Lord. Surely, He won't do anything to us for we're His children. We are His nation. Micah points out that there is no justice in the courts. It is whatever looks good for the day. The bribe gets put into the pocket. The people who are already oppressed can find no justice in the court system, rulers or leaders for they are corrupt. These corrupt leaders continue to change their own laws. Micah prophesies all this to the people.

Does this sound familiar? Do you recognize that with any country you might happen to live in of how easy it is to wander away from the Lord? Our country wouldn't do that for the whole history of our country is built upon the blessings of the Lord. We're not Israel but look at the whole history of our country in terms of the incredible blessings that God has showered down upon us. Surely it is not our country. We would not turn our back on the Lord, walk unfaithfully, or take for granted the blessings that the Lord has poured out upon us.

I hope that as you think about that and ponder about what Micah has prophesied that you would do more than just think about our country. I start with seeing how America is just like that. It takes me a while but eventually the Holy Spirit says "Bruce, you are just like that. It's easy to look around America and the big cities. It's easy to look at the spillover of immorality. It's also easy to look and see that someone else is doing a lot worse than you. Bruce, you're like that. It is that cycle of faithfulness to unfaithfulness, of receiving the Lord's blessings and then taking those blessings for granted."

Remember there are not chapters when Micah is writing this but when he started Micah 5 and he gets to this point of the prophecy that is being recorded, he says that not only is the Lord coming to do this but it has already started. He is not saying that something bad is coming but it has already started. They have already laid siege to us. So Micah is telling them that He has already started

doing this in their life and in their country. Then he says which is the part we're already familiar with around Christmas that God has already started doing His discipline on us as a country but you Bethlehem, you insignificant place, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for Me, One who is to be Ruler in Israel whose origin is from of old, ancient days.

Micah is prophesying to the large cities of the nation and from this little town God is going to choose the weak to shame the strong. He is going to choose to use the simple to shame the wise. That is the way the Lord works. Why does He do that? He does that so that no one will take credit for it. All the credit and glory will go to the Lord. From you is going to come One to be ruler. Oh good then the ruler will come and defeat these enemies that are coming in to attack us right now. That is not what the Ruler is coming to do. The enemies are here because the Lord is correcting and disciplining you.

The One who is going to come is described by Micah as One whose origin is from of old from ancient days. In the beginning was the Word (from of old, ancient days) and the Word was with God, the Word was God. The One to come that Micah is talking about is Jesus Christ. We celebrate Micah 5:2 but then we stop. We have to read on to see what He is coming to do because it's encouraging what He is coming to do. He says He is going to come in its proper time.

In Micah 5:4–5a it says [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. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] And he shall be their peace. He shall stand. Christ, the One whose birth we celebrate, shall stand and shepherd His flock. He says He is coming as the Ruler and that He will be though we won't understand what the rule actually means, far beyond the rule of the earth for it's the rule of all things, but He will also come and shepherd His flock. John describes Christ in this manner of the Good Shepherd. John 10:1–18 says

[1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. [2] But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. [3] To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. [5] A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." [6] This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. [7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [9] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to

steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. [11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. [12] He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. [13] He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. [14] I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, [15] just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. [16] And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. [17] For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. [18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Wow! What Micah says to us is not just that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem but he tells us that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem in order to die and lay down His life. He is going to come as the Good Shepherd and shepherd His people in the strength of the Lord and in the majestic name of the Lord. He defines shepherding as willingly laying down His life. It couldn't be more fitting than on Christmas Eve to celebrate communion, to do that which Christ willingly did for us to engage in that which He said for us to do in remembrance of Him laying down His life and becoming sin for us and allowing Himself to be crucified on the cross that He might take up His life again.

As Micah is wrapping up the Passage I just read to you he says in Micah 5:4b–5a, And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. [5] And he shall be their peace. He is not saying He'll give them peace or that He'll make it peaceful but He shall be their Peace. They wanted peace because they were caught in their sin and they were about to suffering the consequences of their sin as the Lord would so sovereignly allow them to engage in. They wanted peace and wanted it to be peaceful. They wanted it to be like it was, not be bad or be a hardship on them.

Christ comes to do much more than that. He doesn't come just to fix your day or make you happy. He comes to be your Peace so that there is eternal peace, peace with God. As easy as I can take a Micah passage, read through it and listen to his characterization, I have to take it to my personal level and ask, 'what's the cure for that roller coaster cycle of faithfulness to unfaithfulness'. The cure to that is Jesus Christ. There is no other cure. Is it discipline? No. Is it intentionality? No. Is it in our own strength? No. Even when He comes to shepherd us He does it in the strength of the Lord and the majestic name of the Lord.

I pray that every single one of us has true peace, eternal peace, a relationship with God and that we can come to this table set before us to remember,

celebrate and thank the Lord not only for His presence on this earth but for His sacrifice, for shepherding us and to leave knowing that we dwell secure. They shall dwell secure. Was it because they were great people? No. It is because they have a great Savior. You can dwell secure, have the confidence, not in your behavior or actions, but the confidence by the very declaration of God that you dwell secure for all eternity with God the Father Almighty. He is your Peace. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Most gracious heavenly Father, thank You for men You used as prophets to prophesy in Your Name. Lord, thank You for not just leaving us alone to our sin. Lord, thank You for working in our life to allow us to experience a portion of the consequences of our sin that we would be convicted and repent of that sin. Thank You for the forgiveness that You extend to us through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Thank You for sending Jesus not so we could just learn about Him but for sending Jesus that we might in Him have peace with You. Lord, I pray that if there be anyone reading this that does not know You as their personal Savior and Lord, open their eyes, ears and heart to the truth of the Gospel. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death, becoming sin for us and taking on our sin. He paid the just penalty for our sin that we might by surrendering to Him have Him as our Savior and as our Lord. We thank You for Jesus and pray in His Name, Amen.

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