

Who is a God like You? The Gospel According to Micah Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #31

Micah 7

David Sunday

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Please turn in your Bibles to the prophet Micah which you'll find in the Old Testament after the books of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Jonah. We've been reading through the Bible together and we're coming to the Old Testament prophets for our sermons which over the next 12 Sundays are going to be from the prophetic books.

Micah was a prophet who preached to the Southern Kingdom of Israel, otherwise known as Judah. The purpose of his ministry is summed up in Micah 3:8, *"But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin."* It's not an easy ministry to tell people to repent of their sins, to declare to God's people their rebellion and their offenses against a holy God. But it's not a ministry without hope either.

There are three oracles of judgment in Micah and each of them is followed by an oracle of salvation—a word of hope and deliverance.

We're going to read one section of the conclusion of Micah's ministry as a prophet. His name means "Who is like the Lord—Yahweh?" Chapter seven ends with a resounding answer to that question. "Who is a God like You?"

As we read Micah 7 together, I want you to notice that it begins with the word woe. But it ends with a great wow!¹ From woe to wow! Who is a God like You? Amazing! Let's worship Him through His Word.

*¹Woe is me! 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.*

¹ An allusion from Dominic Smart's sermon "Into the Light," —thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/into_the_light.

- ² *The godly has perished from the earth,
and there is no one upright among mankind;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and each hunts the other with a net.*
- ³ *Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well;
the prince and the judge ask for a bribe,
and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul;
thus they weave it together.*
- ⁴ *The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.
The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has
come;
now their confusion is at hand.*
- ⁵ *Put no trust in a neighbor;
have no confidence in a friend;
guard the doors of your mouth
from her who lies in your arms;*
- ⁶ *for the son treats the father with contempt,
the daughter rises up against her mother,
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*
- ⁷ *But as for me, I will look to the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
my God will hear me.*
- ⁸ *Rejoice not over me, O my enemy;
when I fall, I shall rise;
when I sit in darkness,
the LORD will be a light to me.*
- ⁹ *I will bear the indignation of the LORD
because I have sinned against him,
until he pleads my cause
and executes judgment for me.
He will bring me out to the light;
I shall look upon his vindication.*
- ¹⁰ *Then my enemy will see,
and shame will cover her who said to me,
"Where is the LORD your God?"
My eyes will look upon her;
now she will be trampled down
like the mire of the streets.*
- ¹¹ *A day for the building of your walls!
In that day the boundary shall be far extended.*
- ¹² *In that day they will come to you,
from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
and from Egypt to the River,
from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.*
- ¹³ *But the earth will be desolate
because of its inhabitants,
for the fruit of their deeds.*

¹⁴ *Shepherd your people with your staff,
the flock of your inheritance,
who dwell alone in a forest
in the midst of a garden land;
let them graze in Bashan and Gilead
as in the days of old.*

¹⁵ *As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt,
I will show them marvelous things.*

¹⁶ *The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might;
they shall lay their hands on their mouths;
their ears shall be deaf;*

¹⁷ *they shall lick the dust like a serpent,
like the crawling things of the earth;
they shall come trembling out of their strongholds;
they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God,
and they shall be in fear of you.*

¹⁸ *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.*

¹⁹ *He will again have compassion on us;
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.*

²⁰ *You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and steadfast love to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our fathers
from the days of old.*

Thanks be to God for His Living Word. Let's pray.

Who is a pardoning God like Thee? And who has grace so rich and free? Our almighty, gracious Father, send forth Your Spirit in the preaching of Your Word this morning, that we may be astonished anew at the matchless mercies which You have showered on us in Jesus Christ our Lord. For the glory of His Name we pray, Amen.

He Delights in Showing Mercy

How do you manage your regrets? How do you deal with the disappointments and failures in your life as a Christian? When you look at your ministry in the home, in the church, in the community and it seems to bear little fruit, how do you cope with the gloomy sense of frustration and discouragement that casts its dark shadow over you? When your family is in turmoil, when the church is in conflict and when the

culture around you despises and rejects the values that are most precious to you, how can you keep from becoming cynical and brittle with bitterness? Especially when you look at yourself and see your own sins and failures, do you know how to face the most disappointing realities about yourself head on without drowning in despair? Micah did and he shows us how in this chapter.

He's at the end of his life, wrapping-up his ministry and from any human analysis, it hasn't been a huge success. He's been faithful but he's been faithful to a thankless task. He's telling a brazen nation to repent of its sin. There has been no revival, no great awakening, no tribute from a grateful nation to the powerful ministry of a faithful prophet. He has seen none of those results and it hurts.

Micah is brokenhearted when he begins this chapter but his is a brokenhearted boldness. There is hope here—unquenchable hope that is sustaining this prophet as he comes to the end of his ministry. In the words of John Piper (whom God first used to open-up the glories of Micah 7 to me), this is a book that is marked by...

- bold brokenness
- confident contrition
- rugged remorse
- gutsy guilt²

I resonate with those descriptions because I think these words capture the essence of radical Christian living in this age.

There is a clear reason why Micah can be broken, yet bold; remorseful, yet rugged; contrite, yet confident; guilty, yet gutsy. There's a truth that is motivating him throughout this chapter, that's sustaining him and bringing him from a place of woe to a place of wow.

It's because God has opened up His heart and revealed Himself to Micah. By the grace of God, Micah has gotten a clear vision of what motivates the heart of God. As you search through this chapter, of all the things it says about God, there's one thing it says about the motive of God. There's one thing it says about what delights the heart of God; about the reason God is the way He is. We find it in verse 18. It's because of God's heartfelt pleasure and delight in this one thing that Micah can stare

² See John Piper's sermon, "When I Fall, I Will Rise!" —www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/when-i-fall-i-will-rise.

down the regrets, the disappointments, the heartache of his ministry and his own life, and he can rejoice with hope in the midst of it all.

What is that one thing? Look at verse 18: “... *because he delights in steadfast love.*”

Make sure you see this phrase because this is the truth that undergirds everything else Micah is going to tell us about God and about his hope in God. I think this is the hardest truth for Christians to really believe about God—but Micah believes it. Micah believes in a God Who delights in showing mercy.

This phrase is translated in various ways today:

- New American Standard Bible: “...*he delights in unchanging love.*”
- Holman Christian Standard Bible: “...*he delights in faithful love.*”
- New Living Translation: “...*you delight in showing unfailing love.*”
- New International Version and the King James Version: “...*you delight to show mercy.*”

This is at the heart of God. This moves the heart of God. He delights in showing mercy. It doesn't just say that He's able to show mercy. It doesn't just say that sometimes He's merciful. No, He delights in it. He doesn't begrudge being merciful. He isn't resentful or halfhearted about it. When you come to the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in your time of need, God's not up there shrugging His shoulders and sighing³ and saying, “Again? Mercy again? You're about to run out!”

There's a wideness to God's mercy and there's a depth to it. He is glad and generous about it. Mercy overflows from the depths of His being. He is more eager to be merciful than we are to repent. As one of the Puritans has said, “There is more mercy in God than there is sin in us.” God *delights* in showing that mercy.

Do you believe that? Does that truth saturate your being and influence the way you think about your family, ministry, life and what you're accomplishing? He *delights* in showing mercy.

I read the biography of Alexander Whyte a few years ago. He was a well-loved and prominent Scottish pastor a little over a hundred years ago. One evening an older

³ See Jared C. Wilson, “The Father's Not Tsk-tsking,” thegospelcoalition.org/mobile/article/gospeldrivenchurch/the-fathers-not-tsk-tsking

minister came to discuss some pastoral matters with Mr. Whyte—just two pastors talking together. When their business was completed, the old man seemed to linger, not wanting the conversation to end. Finally he asked, seemingly in jest, “Now, sir, have you any word of comfort for an old sinner like me?” (Old pastors are just old sinners who need a word of comfort.) Whyte realized that behind the half-smile was a real seriousness and even a deep agony. He wrote later, “It took my breath away. He was an old saint but he did not know the peace of forgiveness.” Whyte walked over and sat beside the older minister, opened his Bible to Micah 7:18 and read these words, *“He delights in showing mercy.”*

The next morning Alexander Whyte received a letter in reply. It read: “Dear friend, I will never doubt Him again. Guilt had laid hold of me. I was near the gates of hell but that word of God comforted me and I will never doubt Him again. I will never despair again. If the devil casts my sin in my teeth, I will say, ‘Yes, it is all true and you cannot tell the half of it, but I have to deal with the One Who delights in showing mercy.’”⁴

That’s the truth of what moves the heart of God and sustained Micah.

What I’d like to do in the rest of our time as we go through this chapter is to ask the question **what does it mean to have a God Who delights in showing mercy?**

How does this truth change the way we live in this world today? How does it influence us if we really believe it? Not just saying we believe it, but really believe it?

1. Patiently Expecting Good from God (7:1-7)

First, if you really believe we have a God Who delights in showing mercy, it means you are **patiently expecting good from God even in the most miserable circumstances.**

Micah is looking around at the society around him, lamenting the loss of godliness. He says at the beginning of the chapter, “Woe is me. I’ve become like someone who goes into the field in the summer. I’m thirsty and hungry. I’m looking for some fruit and there is none. The fruit has been gathered; the grapes have been

⁴ As quoted in Richard Phillips’ commentary on Micah, from Bryan Chapell, *The Promises of Grace: Living in the Grip of God’s Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 136-37.

gleaned and there's no cluster to eat." He finds himself in the most miserable of circumstances.

In verse two, he says there's no one godly in all the earth. There's no godly remnant remaining. He's preached his heart out and there's no church to show for it. There's no one who loves God. There's no one who is obeying God's Word. Their hearts are all hardened. He comes to the end of his ministry and he doesn't see any fruit—none. He looks at the society around him and sees that they hate one another. There's no one upright among mankind.

Verse three: *"Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well."* The leaders are corrupt and full of bribery. The thing they do best is evil. *"They weave it together"*—they're always conspiring to do evil.

Verse four: You walk up to the best man you can find in leadership, thinking you're going to get help from him and you find him to be *"like a brier."* He just pokes into you and hurts you. He's like *"a thorn hedge."* Because of this, God's judgment is about to come upon the people. They're about to be carried off into exile—that's what he's talking about at the end of verse four when he says, *"The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come..."* The watchman is about to cry out, "Destruction!"

Because of the panic that ensues (in verses five and six), we see that even family loyalty is no longer to be depended upon. You can't trust your own neighbor. You can't have any *"confidence in friends."* And you've even got to be careful what you say to the woman *"who lies in your arms"* at night because there is treachery and betrayal. Sons are against their fathers. Daughters are against their mothers. There's war in the extended families with daughters-in-law and sons-in-law.

Jesus gets ahold of these verses in Matthew 10 and says this is part of what will happen when people follow Him. He will bring division into families. In verses 21-22, He says, *"Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake..."* Jesus continues in verses 34-36: *"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."*

So there's social upheaval and betrayal, even among people who are in the closest of relationships. For some of us, this is not just a lesson in history. This is not just theoretical. Some of you find this to be your life right now. Your family is torn apart; the people you've depended on have betrayed you. You don't know where to look for help. It seems like the government can't help you. There's corruption everywhere you look. Society seems to be falling apart and even within your own household, it's a mess!

You look at your life and wonder where's the fruit of faithfulness to God? Some of you are looking at your ministry right now and you haven't been in it as long as Micah has but you're getting discouraged because it seems like there's little fruit for your labors. But I want to tell you, dear friends, we have a God Who delights in showing mercy. When you believe that truth, you will patiently expect good from Him, even when you're in the most miserable circumstances.

Keep looking to Him. That's what Micah does in verse seven: *"But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."* "Yes, it's miserable but I will look to the Lord." Maybe you've been looking elsewhere. Maybe you've been looking to the government and that's not helping. Maybe you've been looking to a book and you think, "That's what I need. I need to read a book and it will tell me what to do about this mess." Maybe you've been counting on friends and they've been letting you down. But finally you remember the words to Psalm 121:1-2,

*I lift up my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.*

"Oh, yes. I've got to look to the Lord. I'm going to wait." Sometimes that's all you can do—wait expectantly. Everything around you looks like it's falling apart.

When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

(My Hope if Built on Nothing Less by Edward Mote)

You wait expectantly and waiting is not a waste of time. Waiting is not passivity. Waiting can be the ultimate act of worship as you look at everything around you and it seems so miserable. You say, “God, I haven’t lost hope in You. I’m still expecting good from You—from the God of my salvation.” You do not give up. You do not surrender to depression. You wait. “The most powerful form of action by the helpless,” who say through their waiting, “God, I trust you to come through with salvation.” Micah says, “...*my God will hear me.*”

David Prior says, “For Micah, ‘my God’ meant everything. It summarized his life and his work. It was the most eloquent expression he could apply to the realities of the city in which he was operating.”

You wait confidently. “*My God will hear me.*” Micah didn’t throw those words around callously.

Look at your situation, our culture, our church, your family, your ministry, your life. There may be disappointment there. There may be grief there. There may be unfulfilled expectations and dreams for your children, your marriage, your ministry. But I want to ask you what are you more aware of right now? The corruption? The disappointments? The lack of fruit? The breakdown of relationships? Or the fact that you have a God Who delights in showing mercy and hears you when you call on His Name. He hears you. The God Who delights to show mercy hears you. You believe that and it causes you to patiently expect good from Him, even when it’s miserable.

You also wait patiently. Psalm 40:1-3 encourages us with these words:

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.*

But what do you do if the breakdown in your family or in your society is due at least in part to your own sin? What does it mean to have a God Who delights in showing mercy then?

2. Humbly Acknowledging Your Sin Against God (7:8-10)

In verses 8-10, it gets personal. What do you do if the breakdown of your family or your society is due at least in part to your own sin? What does it mean to have a God Who delights in showing mercy then? Well it means that you do not deny the seriousness nor drown in the depths of your own sin.

Notice as we move to verse eight, the personal pronouns take over.

*Rejoice not over **me**, O **my** enemy;
when **I** fall, **I** shall rise;
when **I** sit in darkness,
the LORD will be a light to **me**.
I will bear the indignation of the LORD
because **I** have sinned against him...*

Micah is personalizing the situation here. He doesn't stand aloof looking at this corrupt society, at this family that is breaking down. He doesn't stand aloof and set himself apart from God's sinful people. He embraces his solidarity with them. He acknowledges their sin as his own. He shows them how to face the grave reality of their sins without drowning in despair. He stands in their place; he embraces their guilt and responsibility. He sees himself as a fallen sinner right alongside them and he says, "Look, you can be broken, yet bold. You can be contrite, yet confident. You can be remorseful, yet rugged in your faith and hope in God. You can be guilty, yet gutsy in your approach to him and I'm going to show you how."

That's what Micah is doing here. He's showing them how to repent; how to face the gravity of their sins head on without drowning in the depths of despair. So he pictures himself and God's people as a city under siege. There's devastation. They're suffering for their sins. The enemy is taunting them saying (verse ten), "*Where is the Lord your God?*" Because the world loves it when Christians fall, the world loves to gloat. The world loves to say, "Oh, you said you're a Christian. Look at you now, you miserable wretch." Satan loves to tempt us to sin and when he gets us to sin, he loves to accuse us of how wicked and vile we are. He loves to drown us in despair.

There is a worldly grief that produces death, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*" You can look at your sinfulness and be filled with

remorse and disappointment in yourself and your failures and die there without any hope.

Now we can do two things with our sinfulness that are both wrong. One is to drown in the depths of despair over it. The other is to deny it. “I’m better than all these people. This society is wicked—I’m good.” As a church, we’ve got to be careful. When we see the wickedness of society and the decadence of our culture, we need to be careful not to stand up in our ivory towers and shout out how wrong they are. When we’re confronted with things like gay marriage, we’ve got to be very careful that the tone of our voice and the attitude of our opposition does not communicate to the world that they’re wicked and we’re good because we are sinners right along with the rest of them.

So Micah does not deny the reality of the sinfulness of God’s people. In fact, Francis Schaeffer said that whenever we find ourselves in a situation of brokenness, whenever we find ourselves in a culture that seems to be falling apart, the problem is never what’s going on in the culture. He said, “The real problem is this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord’s work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.”

Schaeffer said the solution always starts with repentance and reformation amongst God’s people. So Micah models that here. Apply it to your family situation. Things might be falling apart in your parenting or your marriage—be careful that you’re not just looking at the sin of your spouse or the sin of your children without doing what Micah does in verses 8-10, recognizing his own sin. He shows us how God’s people repent.

Verse nine: *“I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him...”* We fully acknowledge our own sin. We don’t minimize its ugliness. We don’t play it down.⁵ Micah accepts God’s indignation. He doesn’t say like Cain did in Genesis 4:14, *“My punishment is greater than I can bear.”* He says, “No, I will bear the indignation of the Lord.” He trembles at God’s righteous displeasure. He sits in dust and ashes. He does what James 4:8b-10a says we should do when we recognize our sin, *“Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to*

⁵ See Piper, *ibid.*

mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord...” That’s what Micah is saying he’s going to do here. “I’m going to humble myself before the Lord because I have sinned against Him.”

Yet in your brokenness, be bold! In your contrition be confident! In your remorse exercise rugged faith! In your guilt be gutsy! You don’t have to be paralyzed by remorse and regret. And Micah is not.

Look at the confidence he expresses in these verses:

- Verse 8: “...*when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.*”
- Verse 9—look at the middle, “He’s going to *plead my cause*. He’s going to come to my defense.” Not because Micah is not guilty.
- Look at what else he’s going to do in verse 9: “He will *execute judgment for me...*” Notice the preposition is for—not against. How can that be? How can a holy God Who hates sin look at me in my guilt and shame and remorse and repentance and He can come and execute judgment for me? He can “*bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.*” My enemy is going to see and be covered with shame for the way he taunted me. My enemies are going to be trampled down “*like the mire of the streets.*”

How can you be guilty, yet gutsy like this? Only if you know and believe this truth about God: He delights in showing mercy. If you don’t believe that, you will never be free to face your own sins honestly. You’ll either have to deny them or you’re drowning in them. But if you believe in a God Who delights in showing mercy, you can face the worst truths about yourself and still have glorious hope! You can acknowledge your failures and still believe that God will lift you up and shine His light into your darkness and plead your cause and execute judgment for you, not against you! How? Your God delights in showing mercy. This truth frees you to face the truth about yourself—as ugly as it may be—and to live with freedom and confidence in the midst of disappointment and devastation caused even by your own sin. That’s the gospel.

This song says it well:

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

(Before The Throne of Grace Above by Charitie L. Bancroft & William R. Bradbury, 1863)

3. Hopefully Anticipating the Triumph of God's Kingdom (7:11-13)

Then thirdly, if you believe that God delights in showing mercy, it means you are full of hope in the future triumph of Christ's Kingdom.

Micah is at the end of his ministry—there's not a lot of fruit but he looks ahead, beyond his lifetime to a day when the walls will be rebuilt and the boundaries of God's people will be extended to encompass people from far-off nations where they will dwell secure under God's favor. Outside of that protection all of God's enemies will be desolated. He looks forward to the triumph of Christ's Kingdom. That fills him with hope.

If we're going to be sustained in ministry over the long haul, we need to see that the fruits of the ministry of the gospel extend far beyond our own little lifetime and what we can see. We need to see our present life and ministry in the great flow of redemptive history. We have the privilege of being part of the Kingdom that will have no end. Victory is sure!

That's what Micah does in verses 11-13. God delights in showing mercy so Micah looks with hope into the future.

4. Faithfully Praying for God's Shepherding Care (7:14-17)

Now we come to the fourth influence this truth has on Micah's life. When you believe God delights to show mercy, it means you continue to pray without ceasing, even when your ministry has ended.

That's what Micah does in verse 14. He's done preaching but he's not done praying. Verse 14,

*Shepherd your people with your staff,
the flock of your inheritance,
who dwell alone in a forest
in the midst of a garden land;
let them graze in Bashan and Gilead
as in the days of old.*

“Bring them into fruitful places again, God. Shepherd them. Take their turmoil at present and bring them into a place of blessing. Let them dwell under Your favor and leadership.”

The word shepherd is Micah's favorite expression for the Messiah. We read in Micah 5:2 those famous words about Bethlehem:

*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.*

It says in Micah 5:4-5a,

*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.
And he shall be their peace.*

What Micah is doing in verse 7:14 is looking to the Chief Shepherd of the people and saying, “Oh God, save Your people and bless Your heritage. Be their Shepherd and carry them forever as You have promised. Bring them into a place of safety and plenty. Lead them into the green pastures and beside the still waters. Destroy their enemies. Indeed, convert their enemies and bring them like serpents licking the dust (verse 17) into your Kingdom.”

Because God delights to show mercy, Micah believes God is going to do that and in indeed, in verse 15, God gives him part of the answer to his prayer. Micah

prays in verse 14 then in verse 15, God says, “I will do it Micah. I’m going to answer your prayer.”

*As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt,
I will show them marvelous things.*

I just want to ask you, are you still praying for those people in your life who disappoint you? Are you still praying for the ones who do not seem to have responded to the fruit of your ministry? Parents for children who are going off in a different direction and it grieves your heart, are you still praying with hope and expecting good from God? Are you demonstrating that you believe He is a God Who delights to show mercy?

As a pastor, this is instructive for me. I pray before I preach but do I pray after I preach? Do I pray for the fruit of the ministry? Do I believe that when I’m done doing the little I can do, God is not done doing the whole lot that He can do?

5. Continually Being Astonished by God’s Mercy (7:18-20)

Finally, when you believe in a God Who delights to show mercy, it means you never cease to be astonished by grace so rich and free. Micah began with the word woe but by verse 18, he’s gone from woe to wow! *“Who is a God like you?”* Who is a God like our God? It brings us back to the Exodus when the children of Israel came to the Red Sea, passed through it on dry ground and all the armies of Egypt were drowned in the sea. In Exodus 15:11-12, Moses sang, *“Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.”*

But Micah at the end of his prophecy says, “I’m going to take it up a notch. Not only does God destroy the enemies of His people and bring them through safely, but He also destroys their greatest enemy—their own sin.” This is what makes the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the incomparable God. This is what makes God peerless among all the gods of this world that aren’t gods at all. This is what makes the Christian God the One true and only God. He’s the God Who forgives sin. He’s the God Who can wipe out our guilt. That’s what they said about Jesus, isn’t it? “Who is this Who even forgives sins? We’ve seen Him heal the sick and raise the dead and give

sight to the blind, but He can also forgive sins! That's what makes Him unlike any other god.

Your God is not only awesome in doing wonders, your God is not only holy and righteous and pure, your God is not only the God Who created light out of darkness, your God is the God Who can take a sinner and cleanse him from his guilt and bring him into His everlasting favor and that's what Micah marvels at the most. That's what Micah is astonished by. Even though he's come to the end of his ministry and it looks like corruption prevails and it looks like families are falling apart and it looks like the world is literally going to hell, he hasn't lost hope because God delights to show mercy. This truth fills him with joy. It thrills his heart. It sustains him.

He's a God Who pardons iniquity. He carries it away like the scapegoat going into the wilderness. He passes over transgressions like the night the Israelites put the blood over the doorpost of their homes and the angel of destruction passed by. Now Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed and God passes over all our guilt and rebellious deeds. He remembers our sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

Look at verse 19. *"He will again have compassion on us..."* Like a mother feeling tender care for her little children, God has compassion on His sinful people. *"He will tread our iniquities underfoot."* I love that. He not only cleanses us from the defilement of sin but He subdues the powers of our sin. Like a snake in the playground God stomps on the head of that serpent of sin and subdues its power to attract us; its power to hamper us; its power to defile us; its power to indwell us. He frees us, not only from its guilt but from its reigning power over our lives so we're truly free, not only from the punishment of sins but ultimately from the very presence of our sins. We will be saved to sin no more. *"He will tread our iniquities underfoot."*

He *"will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."* Just like Pharaoh's army drowned in the sea, never to come up and torment the Israelites again. They didn't get to the other side and find the Egyptians swimming to shore to torment them. They were drowned forever. If you're in Christ, your sins have been nailed to His cross so you bear them no more and you'll never find your sins creeping up again to torment you. They are drowned into the depths of the sea. Corrie ten Boom said, "When we confess our sins, God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever. I believe God then places a sign out there that says, NO FISHING ALLOWED."

My family is in Wisconsin this weekend so I can say a little word of boasting about my daughter, Rebekah. She graduated from high school last week and in the program all the students had to pick a verse that was most meaningful to them. As I opened that program and looked through the verses, I was utterly amazed to find that Rebekah had picked Micah 7:18-19. I thought, "Wow! Where did she ever find that? How did that truth impress itself on her heart?" I was filled with joy as a father because there's nothing about God that I would want to have influence my daughter's heart more than this truth. "He delights to show mercy."

This is our God. Unlike any other god, He is a God Who pardons iniquity.

- He passes over transgression for the remnant of His inheritance.
- For those who repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus, He will not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love.
- He will have compassion on you—tender affection like that of a mother for her child. Even if you are really feeling the weight of your own sins and feeling underneath God's righteous indignation.
- He will again have compassion on you and will tread your iniquities underfoot—subduing your sins like a snake on the playground.

- He will cast all your sins into the depth of the sea.

How do you know He will do all that for you? Because He is faithful to His promise that He made to Jacob. Because of His steadfast love to Abraham (verse 20). What He has sworn, He will do.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood (of our sins).
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.

(My Hope is Built by Edward Mote, 1834 & William Bradbury, 1863)

I just want to ask you again: What are you more aware of this morning, the woe of your situation or the wow of what God has done in Christ? What word more closely expresses your attitude today? WOE or WOW? Are you alarmed, disturbed, cast down, discouraged, defeated or disappointed? Or are you astonished, amazed, grateful and full of hope as you contemplate the incomparable mercies of your gracious God?

Let's pray: God, we come to You with all kinds of disappointment. With unfulfilled desires and expectations. With turmoil in a culture that is fast running

from You. With families that are being broken through the love of this world and the things of this world. With lives that are vulnerable to every form of corruption and evil. God, we bow before You in a broken world, desperately in need of a Savior. We thank You that You are a God Who hears us. We wait expectantly for You to act. Lord, in the midst of the turmoil of our lives, would You shepherd us? Would You show us Your faithfulness to your promises? Would You bring joy to our hearts with the astonishing truth of the gospel? There is no God like You so we worship You for Who You are and for all You've done for us in Jesus Christ. We flee to and cling to Him together. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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