

1. The LORD Cries Out to the City:

- a. The city is the heart of the nation
 - i. It is the seat of its culture, for better and for worse
 - ii. Everything of the culture seems to be fertilized in the greenhouse of the city
 1. Art, Science, Literature, Creativity, Innovation, Medicine
 2. Crime, Violence, Bribery, Corruption
 - iii. “As goes the city, so goes the nation” – Richard Phillips
- b. How gracious of God to “cry out” to the city!
 - i. Micah pictures the LORD here, the Sovereign Creator, the Holy One, as pleading with the city of Jerusalem to hear Him!
 - ii. This implies that Jerusalem had forgotten God’s voice, they had forgotten the promise that God’s Word is their life (Deut 32:47)
 - iii. So Micah proclaims that it is wise to fear the LORD, for it is the beginning of wisdom

2. The City Wants God to Leave it Alone

- a. “Just let it be, God!”
 - i. Things were going well, particularly economically, for Israel
 - ii. As long as things were going well, Israel forgot God, ignored Him, wanted Him to just leave them alone
 - iii. There was peace for the wealthy, for the have’s, yet at the expense of the weak under the oppression of injustice
- b. Sin hates holiness
 - i. Love and its watered-down definition that diminishes holiness, both of God and of man (the way we are supposed to be)
 - ii. So, the people wanted God to just “look past” their sins and let it go
 1. “Why would God care about that? It’s not a big deal!”
 2. “What kind of God would worry about who I sleep with? Doesn’t he have better things to do?”
 3. In other words, “Just leave me alone, God!”
 - iii. My experience in revealing my “job” as pastor
 1. People immediately feel uncomfortable, even though there is no reason
 2. They feel more uncomfortable if they’ve been swearing, or telling dirty jokes, or demeaning other people before they know
- c. There is a time for boldness, for hard words
 - i. What is the city to hear?
 - ii. “of the rod and who appointed it!”
 1. The “staff” was indicative of authority, often to speak of “tribes” as those organized into distinct peoples led by distinct leaders
 2. Moses’ “staff” indicated his authority to lead the people, thus the LORD used it in His miracles to show His authority through Moses
 - iii. Thus, Micah is proclaiming that God has appointed, by His own power, that power and authority is coming upon Israel
 1. From Assyria as God’s rod of discipline upon His people
 2. Isaiah 10:5 – “Ah Assyria, the rod of my anger, the staff in their hands is my fury!”

3. God Cares That We Treat Power and Truth Rightly

- a. God Judges How We Handle Power
 - i. “Can I forget *any longer* the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked?”
 1. Note the “any longer”

2. God has been patient (2 Peter 3:9), the “forgetting” and “remembering” of God is not literal, but figurative in His action pertaining to His promise (Gen 9:15; Ezek 16:60; Jer 14:21)
- ii. The issue of pursuing wealth and money at the expense of justice and *chesed* is seen and cared for by God
 1. God is in the marketplace, and He desires righteousness for His people at all times, for true religion is exemplified in how we treat other people
 2. Note that it is not wrong to do business, but one needs to do it fairly and with a constant concern for the weaker party
- iii. How we handle wealth is really an extension of how we handle power
 1. What do we do with our power, when nobody can really see
 - a. The “scant measure” was where a unit of volume, which was measured out by the business owner, would be slightly smaller so as to actually give less than what is paid for
 - b. Buyers had to trust the business owner that his scoop, barrel, and weights were accurate and trustworthy, thus the seller had the power
 2. Do we use our power rightly? Treat people fairly, even when they don’t know or have another option? Gouge them?
- iv. 2 Cor 8:9 – We are born again to a humility that shares and sacrifices our power for the sake of others, just like our Savior
- b. God Judges How We Handle Truth
 - i. “cursed scales of deception” - “wicked scales and deceptive weights”
 1. “rich men full of violence”
 2. “residents speak lies” “deceitful tongue”
 - ii. Eph 4:25 – the process of the new self’s growth in truth, in laying aside falsehood
 1. Changed from the entropic decay of sin to the growth of maturity into the image of Christ, the truth-speaker in love

4. God Disciplines Us as Sons by Tearing Down Our Empty Idols

- a. “to make you weak”
 - i. They were strong in their own strength (perceived), thus he would remove their strength by giving them over to that which they desired
- b. “because of your sins”
 - i. This was the position of Omri and Ahab, kings of Israel (1 Kings 16ff)
 1. Omri took what he wanted with violence and founded his kingdom by killing his opponent
 2. Ahab’s reign is summarized by his violence toward Naboth
 3. Their reigns represented an evil and unabashed turning away from the ways of the LORD and an abandonment of Him.
 4. Thusly, Israel’s “walking in their counsels” were a turning away from the LORD, a rejection, and a pursuit of wanton self-centeredness sourced in idolatry
 - ii. We have a tendency to minimize God’s holiness by talking about God’s grace
 1. “God loves everybody...love wins in the end.”
 - iii. This is patently unbiblical, and while we don’t have time to cover that entire issue here, let me say a few things pertaining to godliness, holiness, purity, and grace.
 1. Jesus died to make us holy, not merely to forgive us (Titus 2:14; Rom 14:17)
 2. While being unified with Christ by His grace (Eph 1-3), we are to walk in like manner because we belong to Him (Eph 4-6).

3. God expects us to live the way that we are supposed to live, that is according to His Word, as children exemplifying their Father (Matt 5:48; Luke 6:36; Eph 4:32; 5:1)
- iv. When we do not walk by faith, through loving obedience to God's Word, He will discipline us as His children (Heb 12:5-17; 1 Cor 11:27-32) so that we are transformed into His likeness.
- c. These sins are rooted in idolatry
 - i. Ahab built idols for Baal and Asherah for his wife, Jezebel (1 K 16:31), pursuing a temple for Baal and the land of Naboth with its vineyard
 - ii. Our idolatry we pick up from the world and make it our own, "walking in the counsels of Ahab and Omri"
 1. Making a show of Christianity, but pursuing the idols of wealth, love of pleasure, dishonesty in business, and a general lack of concern for holiness and truth or love for our neighbor
 2. Where is truth in our places of learning? Where is purity in our relationships to those we find attractive? Do we pursue the love of money, the love of comfort, the love of sensual pleasures?
- d. God makes us weak by taking away our idols
 - i. Vanity, Vanity, All is Vanity! (Ecc. 1:2)
 1. It is but a breath, a vapor that is here today and gone in a moment
 2. Why do we pursue it as if it's eternal, as if it will last, as if our meaning and significance is found in it?
 3. God's judgment is the removal of our idols, to reveal their weaknesses
 - ii. You will eat, but will not find satisfaction
 1. Food idol – America does not struggle with this (sarcasm)
 - a. You never have enough, thus obesity
 - b. Try eating the same thing every day – one desires change because the food itself does not satisfy completely
 2. Thus, God says He will remove their food so that they don't have enough to fill their stomachs
 - iii. You will save, but it will be taken from you
 1. Assyria will take it
 2. Siege will lay hold of your food and your wealth
 - a. Prices rise for essential items, but whomever has the sword gets what he wants in wartime
 - b. "You want deception and violence as your means to power, you will have it, but be powerless"
 - iv. He sometimes does this bit by bit
 1. 1 Sam 5:1-6
- e. The satiation of our society does not bring satisfaction
 - i. With our success (even our poor have more today than all but the wealthiest in our country 100 years ago), has not come satisfaction
 1. "In 2005, the typical poor household, as defined by the government, had air conditioning and a car.^[41] For entertainment, the household had two color televisions, cable or satellite TV, a DVD player, and a VCR. In the kitchen, it had a refrigerator, an oven and stove, and a microwave. Other household conveniences included a clothes washer, clothes dryer, ceiling fans, a cordless phone, and a coffee maker. The family was able to obtain medical care when needed. Their home was not overcrowded and was in good repair. By its own report, the family was not hungry and had sufficient funds during

the past year to meet all essential needs.”

(<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/07/what-is-poverty>)

2. The poorest 5% of Americans have more than 68% of the entire world population, and as much as the wealthiest 5% of those in India.
 - a. Yet, depression is the leading cause of disability in the US for those individuals between the ages of 15-44 (2010)
 - b. Our wealth, our resources, our power, have not brought us satisfaction, but have left us empty for they were powerless to deliver true joy to our souls!

5. What are we to do?

- a. Contemplate the past mercy of God!
 - i. Remember His redemption from our slavery to sin in Jesus Christ
 1. This is completed and finished
 2. We have been brought through the sea of judgment upon the dry land of Christ
 3. He is our deliverer and we are His people!
 - ii. Remember that it was all of His goodness and mercy and grace, none of our perfection and pre-existent holiness or purity
 1. Don't fear repentance, nor discipline, for God is more merciful and gracious than you can imagine!
- b. Contemplate the future grace of God!
 - i. Jesus has delivered us in order to present us holy and blameless and pure before the Father
 1. This is His desire and His work in us and upon us!
 2. He gives us the wedding clothes for the party
 - ii. Our future with Him is secure not because of our obedience, but because of His obedience
 1. Yet, remember that He has called us into His likeness, to obedience and holy living, from the heart of pure devotion to Him
 2. He DOES care that we live like Him!
- c. Contemplate the present grace of God!
 - i. GOD is FOR YOU!! He who gave His eternal Son, spotless and pure, for us will never throw out Him nor His work and God has delighted to redeem you at such a cost!
 1. TODAY is the Day of Salvation (2 Cor 6:2/quoting Isaiah 49:8)
 - ii. We have been given the Spirit of Christ within us for our good, for our transformation into the maturity and likeness of Christ
 - a. Dependent upon the Father in all things
 - b. Trusting obedience to the Father in all things
 - i. Loving Truth
 - ii. Loving Neighbor
 - iii. For the glory of God
 - iii. Through repentance and faith daily we are becoming more like Jesus in trusting the Father degree by degree being formed from the glory of our salvation into the glory of the fullness of our redemption
 1. Hebrews 12:11
 2. 1 John 3:1-3
 3. Micah 7:7-8