

God's Restorative Justice (Micah 4)

To Read:

1. Matthew 13
2. A

1 I. Introduction

A. As we continue in Micah this morning, I want to start by reminding ourselves of what we are looking for in Micah

1. Micah is set during the tumultuous period of the Assyrian invasion, and he is struggling to understand how God's judgment of His people is good?
2. So, in Micah's first oracle we saw that God's judgment is good because it is merciful
 - a. God was coming down from heaven to destroy those who had worshipped other gods and forsaken His covenant
 - b. But, at the end of the oracle, there was a promise - God would send a shepherd/king who would deliver His people and lead them out of the destruction
 - c. Although it could have, God's judgment didn't end in destruction, it ended in salvation: God's justice would be merciful, a mercy which we saw would be ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ
3. In the second oracle, we are giving a second answer to Micah's question - God's judgment is good because it is gracious
 - a. God's judgment will not only eventually lead to salvation, but God's judgment will bring benefit to His people
 - b. Judgment will turn out to be a gift from God, judgment brings about God's good purposes

B. This morning, we are continuing in this second oracle, looking at chapter 4

1. As we entered the second oracle, I said we would look at this oracle in three parts
 - 1a. In Micah 3, we see God's Responsive Justice - God will react to the injustice of His people
 - 1b. In Micah 4, we see God's Restorative Justice - God purpose for judgment extends beyond destruction
 - 1c. And in Micah 5, we see God's Victorious Justice - a new king will reign over God's people
2. Last week, we took a break and joined the wide body of Christ in Manhattan looking at prayer in October
3. But two weeks ago, but two weeks ago we started the second oracle in chapter 3 and saw that God's judgment removes the injustice of the land
 - a. God's land had been filled with injustice and the leaders of the people profited from injustice - the land had become a terror to the weak and helpless
 - b. But God responded to the injustice by bringing the evil of the powerful back down on their heads - the leaders of the people would be paid back for their injustice, the injustice would not stand
 - c. God would come to destroy the society steeped in injustice and wipe the slate clean - no longer would there be injustice in God's land because the land would be destroyed
 - d. God's justice is gracious because God's justice is just - injustice will not be allowed to stand forever, God will come with vengeance and pay back the oppressor for his oppression
 - e. If God allowed injustice to stand, that would be an unimaginable travesty, so God's grace appoints a judgment to destroy injustice and bring oppression down on the head of the oppressor - God's judgment is gracious
4. So, as we come to chapter 4, Jerusalem has been destroyed and God's people removed from the land
 - a. The land is clean because the people that had brought uncleanness have been purged from the land
 - b. But God doesn't want to simply leave perfect emptiness in His land - emptiness means there is no injustice, but complete destruction is not God's final purpose
 - c. So chapter 4 responds to the destruction of chapter 3 and shows us another reason that God's judgment is gracious
 - d. In chapter 3, God responds to injustice with destruction but, in chapter 4, God responds to destruction with restoration - He doesn't leave His land empty, instead He will rebuild and restore His land

C. Read Micah 4

- 1D. **Proposition:** God promises that judgment will not end in destruction but will restore His kingdom and we must rejoice and run after God's restoration.
 1. God's Justice Will Bring Restoration
 2. God's Purpose Was Restoration
 3. Christ's Death Brings Restoration
 4. We Must Embrace Restoration

1 II. God's Justice Will Bring Restoration

A. The first part of chapter 4 is almost a mirror image of the end of chapter 3

1. God's judgment will not end in destruction, but after Judgment a better land and a better city
2. God wipes the slate clean not to keep a blank slate, but to restore and renew His people in His land
3. And the mirror image of chapter 4 shows us this promise: and we'll see it in three parts

1 B. First, after destruction, God's place will be rebuilt

1. This is the core promise of Micah 4 and comes through a startling contrast that we see by reading through the end of Micah 3 into Micah 4
 - 1a. Micah 3:12 - *Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.*
 - 1b. Micah 4:1-2 - *It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."*
2. In chapter 3, Jerusalem is cast down and destroyed and the temple mount becomes merely a desolate hill
3. But the temple mount, the centerpiece of Jerusalem, would not always remain desolate - in the latter days, the glories of Zion would be restored and a new temple would be established
4. And not just a new temple, but a better temple - the temple mount would not be merely rebuilt, but it would be lifted up as the highest of the mountains; the temple would not merely serve Jerusalem but all peoples will flow to it; not only Israel would serve YHWH, but many nations will come to learn the law of God
5. Judgment will be glorious because it prepares the way for something better - Judgment removes the corrupted relics of God's people and blots out the stain of sin from God's land, and then God builds something better in its place
6. Judgment doesn't end in destruction, it will continue on to restoration

2 C. Second, the renewed land will be founded in justice and will reap peace

1. The contrast between Micah 3 and Micah 4 continues as we continue in Micah 4
 - 1a. Micah 3:9-11 - *Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."*
 - 1b. Micah 4:2-5 - *For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.*
12. In Micah 3, the land had been founded in injustice and injustice had permeated the pillars of society
 - 1a. The leaders corrupted justice by dispensing justice for money instead of upholding righteousness
 - 1b. The priests corrupted justice by teaching 'God's law' for money instead of truly teaching God's law
 - 1c. And the prophets corrupted justice by prophesying for money instead of speaking the Word of God
 - 1d. And this injustice had led to oppression and terror - there was no peace and prosperity in the land, only pillage and fear and a false hope that God would be in the midst of His people - *yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us."*

3. But, in Micah 4, all of this will be changed
 - 1a. Instead of corrupt leaders, God Himself will be the judge - *He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away;*
 - 1b. Instead of the priests obfuscating the law of God, the law will be proclaimed in Jerusalem - *For out of Zion shall go forth the law,*
 - 1c. Instead of the prophets speaking lies in God's name, God's Word will go forth powerfully - *For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*
 - 1d. God's new land will not be founded in injustice but in radical justice, so God's land would no longer be filled with oppression and terror, but with peace and prosperity - *and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*
 - 1e. And there would not be a false hope of God's presence in His people, but a strong promise - *For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.*
4. The new land will be everything that the old land was not - the old land was filled with injustice, fear, and oppression; the new land would be filled with justice, peace and prosperity
 - a. God's justice would be good, even glorious because it restored a perfect land in which God's people could dwell
 - b. Which brings us to the last promise

2 D. Finally, God's people will be gathered into His kingdom again

1. Micah 4:6-8 - *In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore. And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.*
2. The poor, weak and oppressed - those who had been cast off and despised - they will not always be cast out, but God will come to assemble them, to gather them and establish them in His kingdom
3. God's kingdom will be completely restored - God's people will be in God's place under God's rule again
4. This will be the final outcome of judgment - it didn't end with destruction, even though destruction was good, it ended in perfect restoration
5. A new land will be established where the weak are made strong, the lame are made whole, and those who were cast off are gathered again and God Himself will be king over them forever
6. Out of judgment comes salvation, and no shallow theory of salvation, but a salvation that penetrates completely through the people of God - salvation that is redemption and justification and purification and sanctification
7. The land will not be saved to continue as it was, the land will be restored: the land will be made whole and the land will be made good again

- 1 E. Kids' Question:** After destruction, what does God promise? To restore the kingdom and the temple of God.

1 III. God's Purpose Was Restoration

A. As we continue in chapter 4, we come to a series of metaphors

1. There are two movements here at the end of Micah 4 that move rapidly from the current disaster to final salvation
2. And in the middle of both movements is a strong metaphor through which God is going to declare His purpose for judgment: God's judgment is like childbirth and God's judgment is like threshing wheat

1 B. God's Judgment is like Childbirth: bringing good out of evil

1. After promising that kingship would again come to Jerusalem, the oracle moves back to disaster and the failure of the line of kings, Micah 4:9-10 - *Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor? Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.*
2. The destruction that was coming would be the end of the kingly line - David's throne would sit empty and God's people would be carried off in captivity to Babylon
3. And Micah hears the weeping and mourning that takes place as the people's hope in their king fails and they are marched out of the city, but he says that this weeping is like the groaning of childbirth
4. He doesn't deny the pain and the sorrow that is taking place in judgment, but he says that there is an end to pain and sorrow - just as a child is born through pain and suffering, so God's people will be redeemed and rescued through pain and suffering
5. So verse 10 ends with hope - *There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.*
6. Judgment is taking place as a backdrop for God's salvation to be enacted: God's purpose is that out of evil much good will come - judgment will be like childbirth, bringing good out of evil

2 C. God's Judgment is like Threshing: purifying the good and destroying the evil

1. In verse 11, we return to the impending disaster, Micah 4:11-13 - *Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." 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. 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 peoples; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.*
2. The impending destruction would happen as many nations surround Jerusalem looking to cast her down and destroy her
3. But the purposes of the nations are not God's purposes - God is the one who gathered and assembled this army of the nations and they will do His bidding
4. They have come as to a threshing floor where all will be threshed - threshing in Scripture is a symbol of judgment and purification, just as the wheat is separated from the chaff by beating it on the threshing floor so good will be separated from evil through suffering
5. And the evil, the chaff will be taken and blown away or burned in the fire, while the good, the grain, will be stored up and saved
6. This is God's purpose in judgment - to purify His people - in judgment evil will be destroyed and good will be refined, so verse 13 ends with hope - the daughter of Zion will emerge victorious and purified after the impending disaster
7. Judgment is taking place for a purpose: God purposes to refine His people, to purify them from evil and destroy their enemies - judgment will be like the threshing floor, separating the wheat from the chaff

D. God's judgment is infinitely good and infinitely gracious because God has purposed good to come from it

1. His judgment will act to bring immense joy out of astounding sorrow
2. And His judgment will serve to purify His people and bring them victory over their enemies
3. God's judgment is a gift to His people
- 1 4. **Kids' Question:** Why is God's judgment good? It restores the land.

1 IV. Christ's Death Brings Restoration

A. Last week we saw that God's vengeance - His responsive justice - was ultimately fulfilled at the cross of Christ

1. God's justice demands that He repay evil for evil, that He destroy the one who failed to love His neighbor
2. But God has paid the debt that justice demanded by bringing destruction down on His own Son at the cross
3. So now, those who deserve destruction can have their sin destroyed without their final destruction by embracing the cross of Christ - the cross is the justice of God executing vengeance against His people's sin
4. And if that is true, then we should expect that God's ultimate restoration will be fulfilled in the cross of Christ as well
5. God's purpose in judgment is to restore His people and He has accomplished His purpose in Christ
6. So we can see that each of these promises is fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection

1 B. God promised to restore His land after destruction because Christ died to build a new place for God's people

1. God's judgment would clear the land of evil, but after clearing the land, God's judgment would prepare a place for God's people to return to, and Jesus promised that this is what He would do at and after the cross, John 14:1-6 - *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going."* Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
2. Christ went to judgment, Christ went to the cross so that He could destroy the sin of His people but also so that He could prepare a new place for His people to dwell
13. The restoration of God's place would come through Christ's death and resurrection, and the new temple that was promised, the temple to which all the nations would flow, would be realized in Christ as well, John 2:19-22 - *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

2 C. God promised a land founded in justice and peace because Christ died to found God's place in justice and bring peace

1. The promise of the prophets was that a king would come to establish justice
 - 1a. Isaiah 16:5 - *then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness."*
 - 1b. Isaiah 42:4 - *He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.*
12. And Jesus claimed that He would fulfill the promise of justice for God's people, Matthew 12:15-20 - *Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope."*
13. And Christ's death has brought perfect peace and prosperity, Ephesians 2:4-7 - *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*
14. Ephesians 2:14-18- *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*
5. Christ's death has provided a place where God's people can rejoice in justice, peace and prosperity

2 D. God promised to gather His people into His kingdom because Christ died to gather God's people into His kingdom again

1. Micah 4 speaks of God gathering the lame, the afflicted and the outcast and bringing them into His kingdom, and this is exactly what Christ went around doing:
 - 1a. Matthew 4:23-24 - *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.*
 - 1b. Matthew 9:35 - *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.*
 - 1c. Matthew 11:2-6 - *Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*
2. And Paul tells us that the ingathering, the return to the temple of God, the calling of the nations to God and the repopulation of God's kingdom has happened in the death and resurrection of Christ
 - 1a. Ephesians 2:19-22 - *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*
3. Christ's death has gathered a new people into a new kingdom and a new city
 - 1a. Hebrews 12:22-24 - *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.*

2 E. And God's Judgment had purpose because Christ died to refine God's people

1. Micah said that God's judgment would be a threshing and purification for the people of God, Micah 4:12 - *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.*
2. And Jesus has come to do exactly this, to purify His people, Matthew 3:11-12 - *"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."*
3. So Paul looks back at the death of Christ and said it was to purify His people, Titus 2:13-14 - *looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*
4. God's judgment executed on Christ served a purpose - it was meant to bring good out of great evil by purifying and refining His people, destroying their sin and making them righteous again
5. Christ has come not only for destruction but also for restoration - in Christ, God's land and God's people are restored; in Christ, God's judgment is infinitely gracious

1 F. Kids' Question: Who will restore the kingdom and the temple of God? Jesus.

1 V. We Must Embrace Restoration

1 A. In Micah 4, God promises that out of destruction He will bring perfect restoration

1. And anytime we hear a promise of God, God's main demand of us is to want His promise, to desire His promise, to put our faith in His promise
12. Isn't this the significance of Psalm 37:4 - *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.* - we should desire God and His promises because then we will find our desire
13. Or again, Hebrews 11:13-16 - *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.*
4. So as we hear the promise of perfect restoration and see that promise being fulfilled in Christ, we should want that promise, we should make that promise our joy and our hope
5. We need to see our need for God's promise of restoration, we need to see that we need a better place, a place untainted by our sin, we need to see our need to be gathered by God to this place, we need to see our need to be purified from our sin, and we need to want those promises

2 B. But, wanting the promises of God and acting on the promises of God go hand in hand

1. We can't claim to want the promises of God and then go act in opposition to God's promises - to believe and desire God's promise is to act on God's promise
2. We even see that here in Micah 4 - in Micah 4, God is making magnificent promises to His people, things He will do
3. But, at the end of Micah 4, God gives agency to His people - God is the one who will restore the land, establish justice, bring peace and purify His people, but God calls His people to join Him in this task
4. Particularly, God calls His people to join Him in the task of purification - if God is going to thresh His people to remove the chaff, then God's people should rise up and join Him, acting to purify themselves
15. Micah 4:13 - *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 peoples; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.*
6. When God's promise of purification and restoration prove true, then God's people should rise up and embrace God's promise and act to purify themselves and win the victory
7. The truth that the victory belongs to the Lord does not mean that God's people sit back and do nothing, no! they rise up and join in God's victory and work for purification so that they can devote their gain to the Lord, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth

C. So, we should rejoice in the promise of restoration, the promise of purification, the promise of a perfect land established in justice and righteousness that leads to peace and prosperity

1. And we should rejoice that Christ has won and fulfilled that promise for us and is in the midst of purifying us and preparing a place for us to rest and enjoy all of the goodness of God
2. But as we rejoice in God's promise of purification, we should run after God's promise of purification - we should arise and thresh to join God in purifying ourselves from sin as a reflection of our joy at the promise of purification
13. This is what the Apostle John calls us to: John sees the promise that we will be like Him, we will be purified, and if we see that promise then we should act on the promise now, 1 John 3:3 - *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*
14. Paul makes a similar conclusion: if Christ has died to purify a peculiar people for Himself, then we should be saying no to ungodliness and rejecting worldly desires; our passion should be to take hold of purification, Titus 2:11-15 - *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*
5. So we need to hear God's promise, we need to desire God's promise and then we need to act on God's promise - that really is the definition of faith, to desire and act on the promises of God
6. So my question to you is: do you truly desire God's promise of purification? Is your hearts' desire for a land that has not been corrupted by your sin? Are you looking for God to fulfill His promise? So, are you acting on His promise? How?
7. Let's rejoice in God's promise and let's act on His promise - we should go purify ourselves as He is pure! Why? Because He has promised that we will be pure!