

May 4, 2025

Return: God's Word or the Wind?

Micah 1:1-2:13

Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction... we're now entering into the Book of Micah, which is the fourth book chronologically speaking, of the Minor Prophets. Micah was another prophet of God and his ministry took place in the second half of the eighth century BC, from approximately 740 BC to around 687 BC during the reigns of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, as the first verse of his book tells us. Micah prophecies to both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel, as he also mentions in verse one and does throughout the book.

Micah does not tell us much of anything about himself. He identifies his hometown as Moresheth, a town located 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem, which tells us that he is another "outsider" to the religious elites found in the capital much like the prophet Amos, whose book we just finished last week.

The name "Micah" means "Who is like Yahweh?" From the list of kings he gives, we know his prophetic ministry came during a difficult time in the life of God's people. As we've seen so far in our look into the Minor Prophets, moral corruption within Israel was growing, and outside threats, like the Assyrians, were becoming more apparent.

The Book of Micah consists of three cycles in which he gives warnings of God's judgment to Israel, and then a promise of hope that God will bring restoration. And so, for the next three weeks, we will take a look into each of these three sections beginning with ch. 1 and 2 today. Now, we will not be able to go into every detail of these chapters, but we will try and get at the root of each of the messages as we go.

There are a several themes we could focus on as we begin this book, but it seemed to me that the best one to begin with is the question of whether we will really hear from the Lord through Micah, the prophet of God, or from the various other false prophets around us? You see, a question that comes up repeatedly in this passage is whether the people of God will hear the Word of God or not. Because one of the first things we see here in the Book of Micah is that God warns his people by his word, but they often prefer the wind instead.

What do I mean by this? Well, let's take a look at that in our text to find out. Please turn in your Bibles with me to Micah ch.1. We won't be reading through every verse of both chapters, so I encourage you to take some time this week and do so. And because we will be jumping around somewhat through these verses, you can remain seated today.

First, let's take a look at vs. 1. [Read] Maybe this is so obvious that it does not need to be said, but I want to make sure that it is clear. The word that Micah is speaking, the word that all the prophets spoke, is the word of God. Yahweh is speaking through Micah. And the word he is speaking is concerned with God's people, both the northern and southern kingdoms.

And the scene is a court room and God is calling all the earth as a witness against his people as we read in vs. 2, [Read] God's word goes out before him, to bear witness

against his people. But notice it comes before God himself moves, indicating that he is coming in judgment, for the very next verse, vs. 3, says: [Read]

Make no mistake, God is coming in power and in judgment. But before he does, he sends his word to urge his people to repent of the ways that they have not been faithful to the covenant. This is the word of God that comes by Micah. And just like all the other prophets we have looked at so far, Micah spends the next few chapters laying out God's case against Israel and promising God's judgment, if they fail to repent, as the just penalty for their sin. He focuses on the greed of the kings and priest who were exploiting the poor for their own gains, and the fact that they were also leading the people away from God into idolatry by worshipping other gods and thus violating the Law of God.

But, as we read on through these first few chapters, we soon learn that the people don't really want to hear Micah's warnings. We see this first in vs. 6 of ch. 2. Here we hear from the false prophets among the people of God. And we read, [Read 2:6]

What's going on here is that these false prophets, those who claimed to speak for God but were only in it for money and fame, they were telling everyone that everything is going to be fine for God's people as opposed to Micah warning them regarding their sin. And the false prophets are telling Micah to be quiet. They want to assure everyone that there is no problem, there is no threat. God is a nice God and would not bring judgment on his own people. And so they urge Micah to quiet down.

[current examples...]

And sadly, Micah learns, that on the whole, it is the false prophets that the people prefer, in his words they prefer the wind instead as he describes the people, with a tone of frustration, in vs. 11, where he says, [Read vs. 11]

Micah says that these preachers do not preach the real Word of God, but mere wind. They "utter wind and lies" he says, their talk is empty and meaningless. But that is what the people want. That is the kind of preacher they desire. And this hasn't changed folks. The Apostle Paul told of a time that was at hand for the early church and was to come up and into our days when he wrote to Timothy, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

Micah mocks the preaching of the false prophets as saying: "I will preach to you of wine and strong drink." Now, it's clear that he chose this imagery for a reason, for, alcohol dulls our senses and our awareness. Micah's point is that what the people really want is preaching that will dull their senses and their self-awareness, preaching that does not call them to account but, rather, affirms their lifestyles. That lulls them into a sense of security.

That, however, is in contrast to the effect that the word of God should have in our lives. For the Word of God ought not to lull or numb us, but rather, if truly heard, it should jolt us from complacency and alarm us. The hearing of God's word should always lead to a response of action, but its the wind of the false prophets that soothes one into complacency. And it's clear, the people prefer the wind. Which should lead us to ask: What about us? How do we respond when the Word of God comes to us? And what are the ways that we tend to prefer the wind of false teaching instead?

Now, this can take many forms, but one of the most obvious forms is the lie that tells us that God doesn't care what we do. We see this in the ways in which the Israelites, as a whole, continued to conduct themselves because they chose to believe the false prophet's claims that they were all good and could live as they please because God would not judge them. And this type of attitude tends to dull our senses both literally and spiritually, and we can be prone to welcome any who will encourage us in it. And it's not hard to see the influence in our culture today.

That is one way of preferring the wind over God's word, one that does not call us to account because it tells us that all things are okay and any choice we make in just about any area of life should be celebrated. In some ways, as Christians, that is easier to spot. But we, as Christians, have a history of missing another form of wind so to speak. One which doesn't call us to repentance, not because it rejects the need of it, but because it assures us that we don't need it.

We get a good picture of this when we consider a parable that Jesus told in Luke 18, which we heard read for us earlier in the NT reading. In this parable we read about two men, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, and they go up to the Temple to pray. And the self-righteous Pharisee is so thankful that he is not like the other sinners, especially the tax collector, and has all his religious actions to prove that he is so righteous and deserves God's mercy. In contrast, the tax collector won't even look up towards Heaven because he knows that he is a sinner and asks for God's mercy knowing that he doesn't deserve it and Jesus says that the tax collector is the one who is justified before God in this scenario.

This Pharisee in Jesus's parable had studied the Scriptures. As one who had studied to become a religious leader, he would have had the Law memorized. So, on one level he knew the Word of God, and yet, did he? Did he really receive the Word, or had he somehow managed, in his mind, to make it into something that told him there was nothing for him to do, that all was well, that there was nothing for him to repent of? That's what he had done, isn't it? He had turned the Word, which should have confronted him and called him to repentance, and he turned it into empty wind that dulled his senses, that told him all was well, that he was just as he needed to be, that the real problem with the world was other people, like that tax collector, not people like him.

The wind of false preaching can take very different forms. We see it in the attitude of doing what ever you like because God doesn't really care, and we see it in the attitude of the self-righteous Pharisee. But the Word of God confronts them both. And so, what about us? Do we really hear the word? Or do we prefer soothing wind instead? Do we prefer to make the Bible into a series of assurances that promise everything but expects nothing from us? Do we prefer a message that we can do as we please and God and we only call on God when we need a helping hand? Is that what we prefer to the actual message of the Bible, which presents God as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who rightfully demands our allegiance, our obedience, and our full commitment?

God warns his people by his word. He gives it to us like a mirror, to see ourselves as we are, and then to call us to repentance and return to a right relationship with him. But we, in a wide variety of ways often prefer the wind.

So what are we to do? We need to turn away from the wind and turn towards the word. We all probably have certain voices or media that we seek out in our lives that fill, for

us, the role of those false prophets. They will speak to us the wind, the intoxicating message of our preference. Our calling, from Micah, is to resist the wind of our preferred false preachers, and to pursue instead the Word of God, which confronts us, and warns us, and calls us to faithfulness.

Micah brings the Word of God to the people and the people have made it evident that they prefer not to listen to it, but choose to listen to those who say what they want to hear. And left to ourselves, we would much prefer to do the same. But thanks be to God that he doesn't leave his people to chase after the wind. In the last few verses of ch. 2, Micah tells us that not only has God given us his Word, spoken through the prophet, but that he himself will come and gather his people like a shepherd does his sheep. And who is it that he will gather? His people, for God's people know his voice. [Read vs. 12-13]

These verse ultimately speak of the incarnation, of God himself taking on flesh in the person of Jesus, his Messiah, to inaugurate the Kingdom and the gathering of God's people. And it was Jesus himself who said in John 10: 27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

Along with our passage in Micah, this verses present God to us as our Shepherd-King. And he is the kind of Shepherd who will not abandon his sheep, but he will constantly pursue them. The Minor Prophets are an excellent example of this. How many times did God send warning to his people to repent and return to him? And it would be for their good. Because that's the kind of Shepherd-King he is.

Micah's words are a call to repent before God's judgment arrives. His call is to abandon chasing after the wind, and turn instead to the Lord, so that he might meet us not as a judge but as our loving Shepherd and King. But it begins by hearing the word, and by turning from the wind. Which is why Micah begins this book with these words, "Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it." Because here, in the Book of Micah, God himself is speaking to us. May we have ears to hear it.

Let's pray and prepare our hearts for communion.