

May 11, 2025

Return: Peace in the Midst of Chaos

Micah 5:2-5a

Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction... Mother's day/Christmas...

I'm sure we're all familiar with the phrase, "The night is darkest just before the dawn." The idea behind this saying is that when your life seems to be about as bad as it possibly could be, then relief must be coming. In the darkness of deepest night, the sun must be about to break into a new day.

One of my favorite moments to experience is when I'm out hunting in the early morning hours. After I make my way into the spot where I'm going to sit it's completely dark and there is total silence. Then, as the first glimmer of the sun's light begins to pierce through the darkness the woods become alive with the singing of birds and chatter and movement of all the critters. It truly is an amazing experience.

There's a ring of truth to this saying. There's something hopeful and encouraging about it. But, there's also something profoundly biblical about it. The oppressive darkness giving way to glorious daybreak is a pattern that we see again and again in the narrative of scripture. Ultimately, we see it at the resurrection, which we celebrated a few weeks ago, when the darkness of sin and death was overcome at the breaking of the third day when the tomb was found empty and the Lord Jesus risen from the grave. Time and time again, when God's people are faced with seemingly unbeatable trials and difficulties, they are then delivered by a good and gracious God. That's not to say that God doesn't allow us to go through the dark and difficult times, sometimes as the just consequences of our own sin and bad decisions, but even then, for the believer, it is always with our good in mind and the empty tomb is what gives us the hope that, one day, he will deliver us from every trial, hurt and even death itself.

As we get into our text for this morning in the Book of Micah, we find the people of Judah, once again, in another difficult situation, one in which it was hard for them to see the light through the darkness. Last week I mentioned that Micah breaks down into 3 cycles, each starting with the announcement of God's judgement followed by a message of hope. In chs. 3 and 4 we find the announcement of God's judgement which then brings us to the beginning of ch. 5. Now, it's important for us to know that at this point, the Northern Kingdom had been destroyed 20 years earlier and the Assyrians are at the doorstep, ready to lay a siege around the city of Jerusalem.

Whenever you read the prophets, you realize what a difficult job they had. So often, their primary job was to preach bad news to people that didn't want to hear it. We talked a little bit about that last week, and who would want that job? And this was the message that God gave to Micah to preach, difficult days were ahead for Judah. But even in the midst of terrible, discouraging, depressing news, Micah relays some wonderful news: take comfort in the one who is to come. If you are able, please stand with me as I read the word of God this morning from the Book of Micah 5:1-5 [Read the passage]

The opening verses of Micah 5, describe for us what's going on in the moment and what is to come for Judah, as find that danger is on the doorstep. Literally, as we read in 2 Kings, after the Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom, they turned their sights to the south and towards Jerusalem. In 701 BC, they begin to lay siege works around Jerusalem, which was an ancient tactic to starve out an enemy. And this is a picture to what sin, and the consequences of sin, either our own or someone else's, does to us isn't it? It closes us in and starves us of the joy and peace that is ours in Jesus.

And even though, in the previous chapters, God reminds His people of their sin, and with the consequences of that sin at their doorstep, here he promises to deliver His faithful remnant out of devastation and distress. Which he does. Back to 2 Kings, it just so happens that the King of Judah at the time was Hezekiah, and he was a good and righteous king. We're told that he puts on sackcloth and ashes and cries out to the Lord on behalf of his people and an angel of the Lord passes through the camp of the Assyrians and strikes down 185,000 men and forces their retreat.

Which points us to the fact that this promise of deliverance is ultimately fulfilled in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, a greater king who would stand in the gap for his people. Indeed, the incarnation of God the Son realizes all of Israel's hopes for salvation. No matter how heavy the darkness of sin had become, the light of God's salvation in Christ infinitely outweighs it. No matter what darkness we find ourselves in, we can and should draw strength from the fact that God's purposes for the good of his people are far greater than the circumstances around us.

How do we know that promised deliverer is fulfilled in Jesus? That's where the wise men come in. In the passage that was read earlier from Matthew 2, we're told wise men from the east visit King Herod and tell him that they had come to worship the one born King of the Jews. Herod knew of the prophecies about the messianic king and he asked the chief priests and scribes where the king would be born, and they quote to him Micah 5:2. In other words, Micah 5 was the answer to Herod's question, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

And this brings us to our second point, God uses seemingly weak and small things to accomplish his purposes. To be clear the chief priests and scribes paraphrased Micah 5:2-5. "Bethlehem Ephrathah" is the town's more technical formal name. This great ruler, the Messiah will definitely be born in that tiny town south of Jerusalem.

But not only is Bethlehem a tiny town south of Jerusalem, he also tells us one of its primary characteristics: it's a weak town. Bethlehem was so weak that we're told it's "too little to be among the clans of Judah," which is another way of saying Bethlehem was weak militarily. It wasn't well fortified and didn't have a reserve army that could be called upon at a moment's notice, which is of course, is why it doesn't deserve to be counted among the clans of Judah. Judah was the powerful kingly tribe of Israel, and Bethlehem doesn't really fit that mold.

Notice what's going on here. What did Judah need in that moment? A warrior, a hero. And Micah is telling them that he is coming, sometime in the future and from a small, nowhere town. And yet in God's perfect plan, this little weak town is where the Messiah will be born.

Notice the powerful description of Christ the Messiah at the end of verse 2. [Read] Remember, the Lord is speaking through the prophet Micah, and the Lord says that the Messiah will come, not to accomplish the will of the people of Israel, but to accomplish the will of God. So, it's not about you or me but it's about him.

Again, if you were among the people in Judah wouldn't you want Micah to say, "don't worry you guys, your rescuer is going to come tomorrow and will save you from the Assyrians!" But he doesn't say that, does he? Micah tells the people that the Messiah will accomplish the will of the Lord. And isn't that a helpful reminder? Because so often there's an unspoken expectation for Jesus to do exactly what we want him to do when we want him to do it! We're supposed to have the ideal family, we're supposed to land all the promotions, and of course always avoid hardship.

But of course that mentality is built upon a faulty premise, that Jesus is supposed to grant our every wish and demand. But here we're told that he came to accomplish the will of the one whom he has ruled and reigned with from the very beginning as we see here in our text, "from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler over Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." Christ rules over Israel, because he rules over the whole world! And he has ruled and existed from eternity past. That's what is meant when Micah says that his coming will be "from ancient days," which could also be translated as "from days of eternity past." Hopefully you can see the contrast that Micah is building here. The most important person in all of human history will be born in the weak, podunk town of Bethlehem.

We would expect the most important ruler in the history of Israel to come from the most important Jewish city, Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a strong, fortified city where the temple was located. Jerusalem was the epicenter of Israel. It's where the wise men first went when seeking the new born king in Matthew 2. But again, God doesn't do things the way that makes the most sense to us. God does it the way he sees fit. Jesus didn't come to earth to accomplish our will, he came to accomplish God's will. From the little, humble town of Bethlehem would come the Savior of the World.

And in the midst of all the chaos, even in the midst of grief over God's judgment, hope was on the horizon. Look at vs. 3. [Read] There's a lot going on here but the overall picture that Micah is getting at is the fact that the people of Israel will remain in subjection to other nations until the Messiah arrives. God delivers them from the Assyrians, but because they still refuse to repent, he eventually hands them over to the Babylonians, and then to the Persians, and then to the Greeks, and then the Romans. Now, you might say, "That doesn't sound like hope." But Micah's prophecy is telling us that into this darkness, light will break through when the Messiah comes and he will be Immanuel, God with us, and he will gather his people to himself as we talked about the last couple of weeks.

The final point we see in our passage is that the Messiah will give peace through his strength. Look at verses 4-5. [Read] The imagery here is one of strength isn't it? It says he's going to stand, which means he will stand on a firm foundation and not be moved, and he will shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And because of his strength, all those in his care will be completely safe. They'll dwell secure and he will be their peace.

Isn't that an incredible statement given the context of what's going on here? How can Micah say that God's people will have peace in a future Messiah as the Assyrian war drums grow louder? It almost seems disingenuous doesn't it? It's as if Micah is patting the people of Judah on the heads and saying, "Even if it's not at the hands of the Assyrians, eventually you're going to be taken off into captivity, but it'll all be fine!" But in reality, he's telling the people of Judah that they can experience peace even in the midst of disaster, even in the midst of the chaos.

Now, we are certainly affected by our immediate circumstances in life, but it shouldn't be the place where we find our ultimate peace. And that's the word the Lord called Micah to preach and it's a word that we could all benefit from hearing as well. Our hope, our peace, and our comfort doesn't come from your immediate circumstances, it comes from the Lord Jesus.

And he didn't come to give us political peace, he came to give us something much better, peace with God through his sacrificial death on the cross. His death is our peace. It's what the Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Or how about what Jesus said on the night of his crucifixion? He said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." Isn't that the whole reason Jesus came to earth to begin with? He came to give us peace with God, by paying the penalty of your sin and my sin on the cross.

There are so many anxiety-inducing things going on in our lives today. Many of you face pressures at work, stress over finances, illness and doctors appointments, and not to mention worry over personal relationships with family and friends. All of those things lay siege to our hearts and can create anxiety in our lives, and yet, Micah reminds us that we can have peace through Christ in the midst of it all if we would only completely trust in him.

May we all abandon worldly hope, self-reliance and empty religion, and look where Micah points us, to the one born in Bethlehem who came to make peace for us all by the blood of his cross. My prayer is that even when you face uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, you would find peace and security in the only one who can truly give it, in the person of Jesus. Let's pray together.

Benediction: "And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Amen.