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## Micah 3

God of Justice:  
Just Power

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When you think of “**power**” what do you think of? The **pink energizer bunny**? Your **local power station**? **Powerade**? Maybe you think of **superheroes** and **villains** each have a **power** they can wield to either **help** or **hurt** humanity. Maybe you think of your **boss** or the **President**. Each one has power.

**What** is power? Is power the **strongest person** in the room? Is power **violence**? Power can mean a lot of things but when I say power today I’m talking about the **authority** and **ability** to **make things happen**. Maybe you think power is **inherently evil** and no one should have power over another. But to be made in the **image of God** is to be made to **rule** or **reign** with God—to **share** in God’s power (2 Tim 2:11-12). This means that power is not **inherently evil** but **actually good**.

**Micah 3** is about power. The prophet Micah first addresses those who have **misused** their power, who wield **unjust power**.<sup>1</sup> Then Micah himself **models just power** before hinting at **gospel power**. **Why** should you **care**? Because we **each have power** no matter how young or old we are and we can either use that power for **good** or **evil**. We can either commit injustices with the authority God has given us, and must answer to God for those deeds, or we can act just and true instead. Micah starts by giving us an **example** of **unjust power**.

### **Unjust Power - Authority that uses others for its own good. (v1-4)**

Micah condemns the rulers of Judah and their wrong use of power in the first three verses. Now he uses a graphic **metaphor** of **cannibalism**. A metaphor is a **figure of speech** or **image** so they weren’t actually cannibals. They didn’t eat each other but the way they treated each other was **selfish** and **unhealthy**.

1 Then I said,  
“Listen, you leaders of Jacob,  
you rulers of Israel.  
Should you not embrace justice,  
2 you who hate good and love evil;  
who tear the skin from my people  
and the flesh from their bones;  
3 who eat my people’s flesh,  
strip off their skin  
and break their bones in pieces;  
who chop them up like meat for the pan,  
like flesh for the pot?” (NIV®)

What are they doing? As we learned last week in Micah 2 the leaders of Israel, the elders, judges, and wealthy are using their **influence** to steal the **land** and **homes** of the poor and weak. They are using their authority to **take advantage** of others. As Bernie would say, “They **loved things** and **used people** instead of **using things** and **loving people**.” So how does God judge them? What’s their **sentence**?

4 Then they will cry out to the Lord,  
but he will not answer them.

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

At that time he will hide his face from them  
because of the evil they have done. (NIV®)

Since they have hidden their faces from the poor and needy, and have **not listened** to the cries of the downtrodden, God will **hide** his face from them. They will cry out to God and God will not listen.

I want you to **transport** yourself back in time for a moment. You're standing by the **city gates** and watching the **sale** of a **widow's home** and **property** to a **rich lender**. She has lost everything and will likely have to sell her children into slavery, but the rich lender did everything in **public** and according to **custom**. He lent her money when she was in a tough spot but she couldn't pay him back at the high interest rate. So now he gets to take everything. What would you do? Would you try to help? Or the lender did everything by the book so what's done is done? Would you **side with** the **powerful** or the **powerless**?

Now let's **step into** the **present**? How do you feel about the **#MeToo movement**? What's your gut instinct say? When you hear that **powerful men in business** and **entertainment** have **taken advantage** of **women** is your first instinct assuming the **accusation is true** or that there's a **hidden agenda**? Do you **naturally** side with the **powerful** or the **powerless**? Be **reflective**. **Why** do you think that is? Is it because one of the parties is **familiar** to you and you can **relate** to them? Is there some other reason? What does the **Bible say**? It tells us we **shouldn't automatically side** on the side of the **accuser** or the **accused** but on the side of **truth**.

**Leviticus 19:15** “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. (NIV®)

**However**, the Bible over and over again acknowledges that the poor and needy are **taken advantage of**, not the rich and powerful (Isaiah 1:17, 3:14-15; Amos 2:6-7, 4:1; James 2:2-6).

### **Proverbs 31:8-9**

8 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of all who are destitute.

9 Speak up and judge fairly;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy. (NIV®)

I know there's been **some question** of whether or not women are making it up to get something they want. One **2010 study** reported that only between 2-10% of sexual misconduct allegations are false.<sup>2</sup> So anywhere from 92 to 98 of 100 cases are true. A **1996 report** by the FBI put that figure at 8%.<sup>3</sup> The **US Bureau of Justice** reports only 35% of sexual assaults are reported to police.<sup>4</sup> There's no easy answer to the **#MeToo** movement. But **as the church** we should be **concerned** with **both truth** and **justice** and be **extra mindful** that in a world full of sin it is **not usually** the **powerful** who are **victims** but the **powerless**. **What** did Micah do when he **encountered unjust power**? He **confronted** it with **just power**.

## **Just Power - Authority that lovingly corrects and leads others to God's goodness. (v5-8)**

In our next verses Micah again indicts those in power, this time prophets who only prophesy **good** if they're **paid**, and prophesy **ill** if they're **not paid**.

**5** This is what the Lord says:  
“As for the prophets  
who lead my people astray,  
they proclaim ‘peace’  
if they have something to eat,

but prepare to wage war against anyone  
who refuses to feed them. (NIV®)

These prophets are **corrupt**. What's their **sentence**?<sup>5</sup> They who claim to see God are **blinded** by God.

**6** Therefore night will come over you, without visions,  
and darkness, without divination.

The sun will set for the prophets,  
and the day will go dark for them.

**7** The seers will be ashamed  
and the diviners disgraced.

They will all cover their faces  
because there is no answer from God." (NIV®)

If you **claim** to hear from God but use that authority to take advantage of others, God is not going to **talk** to you anymore (1 Peter 3:7). But Micah **contrasts** this with how the Lord God has really and truly **called him** to **exercise just and good power**.

**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,  
to Israel his sin. (NIV®)

Just power is power based upon the **Holy Spirit, upon God instead of oneself**. Micah can exercise **proper authority** because he's **not** counting on his **own understanding** of the situation or his **own wisdom** but on the **wisdom** and **commandments** of God. He is filled with God's power and justice and might. And what does he do with this God-given, Holy Spirit inspired, power? He **lovingly corrects** the sins of Israel and Judah and works to **lead them back to God's goodness**.

Take a moment and **think about** your **relationships**. Think of your **coworkers**, those who you **report** to and report to you. Think of your **family members**, the ones you love and the ones that **sanctify** you. Think of your **neighbors, friends, and church**. What kind of power are you **exerting** in those relationships? Do you use your power to **manipulate** and **get ahead** of others or to **get your way**? Or do you use your power to love and care for them like a **good parent** uses their **power** to love and care for their **child**? Are you willing to use your power to **correct** them and **lead** them to the Lord, so far as you are able, or are you more concerned that you might **lose** your power if you do so? *Just power corrects and leads others to God.*

What's the **goal** of striving to use our power wisely? Was Micah **effective**? The book of Jeremiah says this about **Micah's ministry**.

**Jeremiah 26:18-19a** "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah. He told all the people of Judah, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says:

“Zion will be plowed like a field,  
Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble,  
the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.’

19 "Did Hezekiah king of Judah or anyone else in Judah put him to death? Did not Hezekiah fear the Lord and seek his favor? And did not the Lord relent, so that he did not bring the disaster he pronounced against them?..."

So what happened? Micah lovingly corrects and leads the people to God and they **actually repent** and **follow**. **King Hezekiah** himself turned to God and sought the Lord's favor. **Never lose hope** in the power of just power. But is just power enough? Will a good use of power lead people to **salvation**? We need something **more**. We need gospel power.

## **Gospel Power - Authority that lays down its life for the good of others.** **(v9-12)**

Here in our final verses the prophet Micah **calls out** the **judges**, the **priests**, and the **prophets** (v9, 11). He's facing the **prophets**, **priests**, and **kings**. But like a **warrior charging** into **battle** he faces his enemies with **courage**—with the **Holy Spirit** in his **chest** (v8).

**9** Hear this, you leaders of Jacob,  
you rulers of Israel,  
who despise justice  
and distort all that is right;  
**10** who build Zion with bloodshed,  
and Jerusalem with wickedness.  
**11** Her leaders judge for a bribe,  
her priests teach for a price,  
and her prophets tell fortunes for money.  
Yet they look for the Lord's support and say,  
"Is not the Lord among us?  
No disaster will come upon us." (NIV®)

What is this disaster? Why does Micah **need** the **Holy Spirit to empower him**? Because he prophesies the **destruction** of the **temple**, what they hold most **valuable** and dear.

**12** Therefore because of you,  
Zion will be plowed like a field,  
Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble,  
the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets. (NIV®)

Just imagine how **threatening** Micah's prophecy is. Listen to this **description** of the temple's importance:

"Within Israel the temple bore manifold social, spiritual, political, economic and cultural importance. In contemporary America it would be the equivalent of the entire range of our iconic political and cultural institutions: the White House, Capitol Hill, the National Cathedral, Wall Street and Hollywood. More than this, Jerusalem, in a profound theological sense, was considered the center of the earth—the hill Yahweh would defend against all attackers. And at the center of Jerusalem was the temple, in whose inner chambers the King of the Universe was known to dwell with an especially awesome presence." (*A Peculiar People* by Rodney Clapp; p. 86)

Micah isn't just saying there's going to be a **run** on the **banks** or your **church** is going to **burn down**. He's saying, "God has **left you** and you're going to **lose everything!**" How do you think the people probably felt hearing this? **Scared? Angry? Murderous?**... Micah reminds me of another **fearless prophet**.

**Mark 13:1-2** As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" 2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." (NIV®)

This prophecy is the one the **Sanhedrin** twists a few days later to try and **condemn Jesus to death**. When Micah prophesies the destruction of the temple he is **foreshadowing a greater prophet** who would prophesy the same thing. Both are correct. **Babylon** destroys Micah's temple and the **Romans** destroy Jesus' temple. Both **risk their own lives** to deliver this message.

Gospel power is willing to **lay down its life** to **rescue others**. Micah's **willingness** to risk his own life makes it possible for his people to be saved from **God's wrath** in **their lifetime**. Jesus' **actual sacrifice** of his life makes it possible for **any** to come to him and be saved from **God's wrath** in the **life to come**. Every day God gives us an opportunity to **lay down our lives** for the good of others.

This may be what **Romans 12:1** calls becoming a "**living sacrifice**". This is laying down your time day after day to **serve others**, to take care of their **needs**, to use your **gifting** to **bless** and **grow** them. It means giving up your **preferences** and **wants** for what God says is good. This is **gospel power**, real authority.

Gospel power could also mean laying down your **actual life**. **France** has been through a lot recently. They've had the **yellow-vest protests** and **riots** and wave after wave of **terrorist attacks**. During an attack last March there was a **glimpse** of **gospel power**. A lone gunman took several people hostage in a French supermarket. **Arnaud Beltrame**, a **French police officer**, offered to trade places with a hostage during the **standoff**. Because of his actions the **hostage lived** but **he died**.

France needs Jesus. That's why it's **so exciting** we're sending a group of **teenagers** over there this summer as **missionaries** and have given money to **Thierry Mirone**, a French Missionary, before. Although we don't know for certain the **state** of this man's heart his **Catholic priest** thinks he was a **true Christian**. **Father Jean-Baptiste** wrote this of Officer Arnaud:

*It seems to me that only his faith can explain the madness of this sacrifice which is today the admiration of all. He understood, as Jesus told us, that there is no greater love than to give one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). He knew that if his life belonged to [his wife] Marielle, it also belonged to God, to France and to his brothers in danger of death. I believe that only a Christian faith animated by charity could ask for this superhuman sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>*

Bernaud is a clear example of someone having **power** entering a state of **vulnerability** in order to **rescue** the **powerless**. This is a beautiful picture of gospel power and this is exactly what Jesus Christ did for us. He who had power **risked himself** to **rescue** the **weak**. Now it's time for you and me to go and do the same. Will you **confess** any use of **unjust** power to Jesus and will you **exercise** just power and gospel power in the places God calls you to serve this week? God is **honored** when we use our power for the **sake of others**.

*Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes further endnotes and references. Click to listen to sermons or to read our story.*

<sup>1</sup> “His message here breaks down into three main points: the misuse of power, the proper use of power, and the renewal of power.” *Micah For You* by Stephen Um. This commentary really helped inspire this sermon.

<sup>2</sup> False Allegations of Sexual Assault: An Analysis of Ten Years of Reported Cases. Published 2010. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180101025446/https://icdv.idaho.gov/conference/handouts/False-Allegations.pdf> Accessed Jan 24, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Crime Index Offenses Reported. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/1996/96sec2.pdf> Accessed Jan 24, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Katty, Kay. *The truth about false assault accusations by women*. BBC News. Published Sep 18, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-us-canada-45565684> Accessed Jan 24, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> “Each judgment oracle focuses on the specifics of the indictment (3: 1–3, 5, 9–11) followed by the sentence of the punishment (3: 4, 6–8, 12). These two parts in each oracle are clearly separated by formal markers indicating the transition from indictment to sentence (אָז/ ’āz [“ then”] in 3: 4; לָכֵן/ lākēn [“ therefore”] in 3: 6, 12).” Dempster, Stephen. *Two Horizons Commentary: Micah*.

<sup>6</sup> Archbishop Charles Chaput. *A Lesson for Holy Week From the Witness of Arnaud Beltrame*. National Catholic Register. Published Mar 26, 2018. <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/a-lesson-for-holy-week-from-the-witness-of-arnaud-beltrame> Accessed Jan 24, 2019.

See also: <https://onepeterfive.com/arnaud-beltrame-recognized-by-the-church-as-a-hero-of-christian-charity/>