

Feb 2, 2019

Micah 4

God of Justice:
A Day of Justice & Peace

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I want you to **imagine a single day of perfect justice and peace**. What would that be like?

- All the **wars** around the world would **cease**.
- All the **jails** and **prisons** would empty.
- It would be a **boring** day on **Wall Street**.
- **Washington DC** would be **quiet** and **Hollywood** would be **clothed**.
- All the **abortion clinics** would **offer care** for pregnant moms **without offering abortions**.
- The **homeless** would be **fed** and **clothed** and have a **warm bed** to sleep in.
- **Veterans** would get the care they need.
- There'd be **no drug overdoses**, **no drunk driving**, **no homicides or crime**.
- There would be no **divorces** and even **remarriages** as split families became whole again.
- **Police officers** and **protestors** would share **pizza** and **stories** together.
- You'd call up that **friendship broken** from **long ago** and it would be like **old times**.
- Your relationship with your family and coworkers would be **perfectly healthy**.
- You'd **finally do** the good job you've always wanted to do at work or school.

Everyone would be **treated fairly** and **respectfully**. And so it would be all **quiet** not just on the **western front** but **everywhere** in every **relationship** and **place**. Do you **want** a day of perfect justice and peace?

God promises us a day of justice and peace is coming. (v1-5)

In our “**God of Justice**” series we’re studying the prophet Micah from the Old Testament. Let’s **review**.

Micah 1 - The problem of idolatry and injustice is in Israel, Judah, and us.

In **Micah 1** we saw the **northern** nation of **Israel** committed idolatry against God—they worshiped false idols. Their idolatry spreads to **southern Judah** who will be **exiled** because of it. *We’re studying this book so that we might recognize and repent of our idols and injustices and experience renewed hope.*

Micah 2 - Love of money leads to unjust treatment of the poor and forsaking the gospel.

In **Micah 2** we learned that “**idolatry** (not loving God first) leads to **injustice** (not loving our neighbor well).” The rich loved wealth so much they stole the **homes** and **land** of the poor and vulnerable and had **false prophets** who told them what they **wanted to hear**. *We were challenged to truly care about the injustices in our world and to reject prosperity-gospel preaching that tells us we can have our best life now.*

Micah 3 - Unjust power takes advantage of others but just power cares about what’s best for others.

In **Micah 3** we **contrasted** selfish-unjust power with what **Micah** exercised, **authority empowered** by the **Holy Spirit** that cares more about others’ good than itself. **Gospel power** is even willing to lay down its life for the good of another. Although this chapter gave us hope in what could be it ended in a **devastating prophecy** that because of their sins God is going to **destroy the temple**.

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

Micah 3:12

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.

Have you ever seen a **deserted piece of property**. What happens? If there's a building it starts to look **run down** and **abandoned** and **trees** and **bushes** start to grow up all around the house. In verse 3 Micah is prophesying that the temple is going to be a heap of **rubble** and the temple mound overlooking Jerusalem will become an **overgrown thicket**. All is lost, but... *God promises us a day of justice and peace is coming.*

Micah 4:1 In the last days

the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and peoples will stream to it. (NIV®)

Micah contradicts the **last verse in chapter 3** with the **first verse in chapter 4**. Your temple mount will be an overgrown thicket, but "in the last days" it will be **restored** and the temple will be **established**. The temple won't just be for the **Jews**, but for all the **nations**, the non-Jews (Gentiles) too. In the following **three verses** Micah prophesies that God will bring **justice and peace** to the **whole world** through this temple.

2 Many nations will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Zion is Jerusalem. Through this new temple God is going to teach the Jews and nations **justice** and **peace**. In the last day God will bring **perfect justice** into our world, settling disputes and wrongdoings.

3 He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.

They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

4 Everyone will sit under their own vine
and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the Lord Almighty has spoken. (NIV®)

In the last days nations will come to this temple and choose **peace** instead of **war**. They will turn **weapons of death** into **tools of life**. This is the most **important** part of Micah. It's the **center** of the book. Isaiah has a **nearly identical** passage in **Isaiah 2:1-5** so this is **key**. *God promises us a day of justice and peace is coming.* But where is that day? Did Judah see it? Their temple was **destroyed**, rebuilt, and destroyed again.¹

That day is here, just not all the way.

“The last days” means the days of the **Messiah**. We believe Jesus is the “Messiah.” That’s what “**Christ**” means. So when Jesus **arrives** he **inaugurates** the last days. He **begins** them. Have you ever heard of the “**now but not yet?**” With his **first coming** Jesus brings the last days. He calls it the **Kingdom of God** during his ministry. But he **doesn’t** bring the kingdom or last days in its **fullness**. That’s for his **second coming** when Jesus returns from **heaven**. The now but not yet means because of Jesus’ first coming we will see signs of **peace** and **justice** but there **won’t be complete** peace and justice.

I brought a **visual aid** to help explain this today. I bought Monica an **insta-camera** for **Christmas**, like a **Polaroid**. Since you’re looking very nicely dressed today I thought I should take a picture of you. Make sure you **smile**. One. Two. Three. **Cheese**. Now it takes about **90 seconds** for this photo to develop. Do we have a photo? Yes. Can we see it yet? No. But every moment it’s becoming **clearer** and **more defined**. Christ brought the last days of justice and peace and every moment we can work to make them more **real**.

That day comes through Christ and our church.

If the “last day” has come with **Jesus**, that means his **temple** is somehow **re-established** on **Mount Zion**, the **Temple Mount** in **Jerusalem**. How can this be? There’s no temple in modern day Israel. **Jesus is the temple of God**. Jesus houses the very **presence** of God because **Jesus is God**.

John 2:19-21

19 Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

20 They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” **21** But the temple he had spoken of was his body. (NIV®) (cf. Matt 12:6; John 1:14, 4:21; Col 1:19)

But it’s not just Jesus who is the temple of God, we are too. The **people of the church** are also the temple.

Ephesians 2:21-22

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (NIV®) (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16)

If the **Holy Spirit** of God **dwells** in you, if he dwells in us as the church, **we are his temple**. Do you know what this means? This means that when the church **comes together** to **worship Jesus**, we are **spiritually** coming to **Mount Zion**. The author of Hebrews writes to the early believers:

Hebrews 12:22-24a “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant...” (NIV®)

There’s a **lot going on here** but what it means is that when the **church gathers to worship Christ** the last day is here, not in its **fullness** or **completion**, but in **real** and **relevant power**. Christ is the temple. We’re a temple. We’re on the **spiritual Mount Zion** and the **nations** will come **through us** to Christ. **As we gather** around Christ we too get to help bring **justice** and **peace** into this world. Part of this is getting to **help solve** the **injustices** we see in our **communities** and **relationships**. We get to **beat swords into plowshares**.

There’s perhaps no better **modern example** of the **church** helping solve injustices than the Christian churches led by Anglican priest, Dinis Sengulane. When the South African country of **Mozambique** was **decolonized**, a **civil war** broke out that lasted from **1977 till 1992—15 years**. It was absolutely terrible. Over a **million people** were abused and murdered in horrible ways. Sengulane led a church delegation that

helped **broker peace** between the rebels and the President.² He and another Christian group helped lay the foundation for a 1992 peace-treaty.

Sengulane and the church didn't stop there because there were still "more than **seven million guns**" hidden all over Mozambique that could lead to another civil war.³ They worked with the government to help start the "**Tools for Arms**" or "**Swords into Plowshares**" project inspired by Isaiah 2.⁴ If you turned in a weapon you got a tool. So turn in your gun and get a shovel that you can use to farm. The more weapons you turned in the more tools you could get. One village turned in so many weapons they got a tractor.⁵

As part of this **initiative** they helped launch an art project where they took these old weapons used for war and bloodshed and turned them into beautiful **pieces of art designed for peace**.

- This first piece is called "**The Saxophone**" and is made from an "AK47 and a bazooka." A weapon used for war is now a symbol of **music** and **harmony**.⁶
- This second piece is called the "Throne of Weapons." The artist also used assault rifles to create a **chair**. The artist intentionally made the back of the chair to look like the **gothic cross** of a **church**.⁷
- This third piece is really a **symbol** of the **whole movement**. They call it the "Tree of Life." It's about **11.5 feet** tall and celebrates the life this movement has helped create.

Over **600,000 weapons** were turned in as part of this program. It was **Christians** and the **church** who **lead this movement**. We **don't need a civil war** to be leaders of justice and peace in our community.

I **surveyed** you at the start of this sermon series asking "**What's an injustice our culture commits?**" and one of your main answers was **abortion**. One way we can help **end abortions** is by **passing laws** that protect the lives of the **unborn**. But as the **church** I think we have to be **extra careful** not to get caught in the **culture wars**. The culture wars are **partisan battles** between **conservative values** and **liberal values** over things like **family and marriage**, the **separation of church and state**, and **abortion**. And a war is what it has become, with **mothers** on one side and **babies** on the other. But if the Lord is calling us to turn our **swords** into **plowshares** how might we approach this **same issue** in a way that promotes both **justice** and **peace**? How can we take care of both mothers and their babies (see prograce.org)?

I still think that means **voting** for **protection** for the **unborn** but it should also include voting for protection for **single moms** and **promoting adoption**. **Casting a ballot** isn't enough. We need to roll up our **sleeves** and **love our neighbors**. We can do that through programs like Safe Families. Safe Families is a program where we as a church come around **families** and **moms** in times of **crisis** and **need**. **Imagine** a young mom comes to us to help take care of her child during a **hard time**. We as a church **rally around her** and provide the love and support she needs. Do you think if her **friend gets pregnant** she's going to encourage her to **abort the baby** or to tell her about the **love and support** she felt through Safe Families and our church? Through programs like Safe Families we can make a difference in the cause of justice. If you're **wavering** over filling out an application, I want to encourage you to **stop wavering** and **just do it**. Our *Discipleship Pathway* wants us to really go out there and **develop relationships** and **change lives**. This provides us a way to do that. As the church we get to begin to bring God's justice and peace into this world.⁸ This won't be easy.

God promises a day of justice and peace but today he calls us to obedience and faith. (v6-13)

In the rest of chapter 4 Micah does **two things**. He calls the people to **obedience** and **faith**. In **verses 6-8** Micah calls the people to have faith that God will **heal their wounds** and **bring them home**.

6 “In that day,” declares the Lord,
“I will gather the lame;
I will assemble the exiles
and those I have brought to grief.
7 I will make the lame my remnant,
those driven away a strong nation.
The Lord will rule over them in Mount Zion
from that day and forever. (NIV®)

We need to **believe**. Believe that the **Messiah Jesus** can **heal the lame**, give **sight** to the **blind**, and **bring eternal life** through the **gospel** message (Matt 11:5; John 5:1-15). Have faith that Jesus can heal your sins and will one day bring you home. In **verse 10** Micah calls the people to “**leave the city**” and “**go to Babylon**” but “there you will be **rescued**.” **Corrie ten Boom**, a woman sent to a **concentration camp** for helping **Jews** escape the **Nazis** said, “The safest place is in the center of God’s will.”⁹ Micah ends chapter 4 by saying the people of Judah and Jerusalem will encounter **resistance** and **exile** but by God’s grace they will overcome. The safest place is in the center of God’s will.

Obedience and faith aren’t easy. That’s why we have to **set our eyes on Jesus**. We have a **Savior** who took a **spear** in his **side** to transform a **deadly cross** into a **symbol of life**. It’s **by his blood** that instruments of war become instruments of peace. It’s by his blood that **warriors** become **peacemakers**. It’s by his blood that you and I can **lay down** our **hostility** and know the **peace of God**. *God promises a day of justice and peace but today he calls us to obedience and faith.*

If you’re at **war** over **something** or **with someone** I want to challenge you to turn your **swords** into **plowshares** and **spears** into **pruning hooks**. Instead of furthering the **conflict**, how can you create justice and peace? How can you use what you have **against** someone **for** them? Pray about it and as the **Holy Spirit** to lead you forward. *God promises a day of justice and peace but today he calls us to obedience and faith.*

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.

¹ The **original temple** was destroyed in **586 BC** but the people of Jerusalem returned from exile and **rebuilt it in 536 BC** but then it was destroyed again in **70 AD** and the people exiled again.

² Wikipedia contributors. (2018, December 31). Dinis Sengulane. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 23:02, January 31, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dinis_Sengulane&oldid=876138049

³ Sprinkle, Preston. *Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence* (Kindle Locations 109-119). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Schwartzott, Amy. "And They Shall Beat Their Swords into Plowshares." Published September 13, 2011. <http://www.peacexpeace.org/2011/09/and-they-shall-beat-their-swords-into-plowshares/> Accessed January 31, 2019.

⁵ Sprinkle, Preston. (Kindle Location 113)

⁶ Transforming Arms into Tools. Diocese of London. ALMA. <https://www.almalink.org/transtool.htm> Accessed January 31, 2019.

⁷ Wikipedia contributors. (2018, September 6). Throne of Weapons. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 23:24, January 31, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Throne_of_Weapons&oldid=858372834

⁸ One of you answered "indifference + inaction" as an injustice. I listened to a sermon by Timothy Keller on "The Justice of God" this week that I posted in our Friends of Cornerstone Facebook Group. In it he makes the point that part of justice is not just punishing wrongdoers (aka. bringing them to justice) but restoring and caring for those hurt by injustice. As Christians, we're not aloud to show indifference and inaction to the poor and needy. We're to help them.

⁹ Greenfield, Craig. *No, the 'Safest Place' Isn't the Center of God's Will*. Published August 19, 2016. <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/no-safest-place-isnt-center-gods-will> Accessed January 31, 2019.