

God's Promise

December 08, 2019

Micah 5:2-4

2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. 3 Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. 4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; 5 and he shall be the one of peace (NRSV).

No matter where we are in the Bible, we come across the same root problem; the battle between good and evil. From the very beginning in Genesis (it all begins with Adam) throughout the Bible people are always being tempted by the powers of evil. Throughout the centuries the Hebrew nation has a problem with temptation. There is a repetitive cycle of prosperity and transgression. After the period of the judges the people wanted an earthly king to lead them to military victory. This is an important period in their history because it changes the dynamics of their relationship with God. Prior to this God was their king. When the people get a ruler from earth they get problems of the earth. David is Israel's favored king. He ruled fairly and had deep respect for the Lord. His son Solomon was also devoted to Lord at first. But, like I said, earthly kings have earthly problems. In order to keep peace with their neighbors Solomon married some of the daughters of foreign kings. They brought in their false religions and Solomon turned away from the Lord. He lived a life of luxury supported by heavy taxes. When his son Rehoboam took the throne he planned even heavier taxes. The people rebelled against this and the kingdom divided with Israel to the north and Judah to the south. During this time Assyria became the world's leading empire and both Israel and Judah began to decline. God continues to love the people. So, God makes an effort to reach out to them and warns them through the prophets: Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. The call is for the people to repent, stop their idolatry, and exercise proper treatment towards the poor. All of this is before the exile begins. So, the people have plenty of warnings from God appealing to them to repent and change.

Then God sent Micah. Today we see that in spite of numerous problems with humanity God makes a loving promise to the people. In 736 BC Micah begins to prophesy. This is 14 years before the exile begins. There is one thing that all true prophets have in common. Their prophecy always comes true. This is because the source is God. True prophets have a common prophetic theme: 1, address sin 2, call for repentance 3, warn of the consequences and 4, offer of hope. In the case of Micah the sin is both idolatry and social injustice. God is not pleased with oppression and abuse of the poor. As a consequence to idolatry and social injustice both Israel and Judah will fall. Micah attacks the wealthy because they have increased their wealth at the expense of others. Micah also attacks the false prophets because they seek their own advantage instead of delivering the word of God to the people of God. You know a true prophet from a false prophet because the word that was spoken comes true and they focus of the will of God. Micah calls for social reform and religious revival. Now it is important to understand that religious revival is not building up attendance; religious revival is reformation. Reform was needed in the Old Testament, so God used Bible heroes, judges, and prophets. Reform was also needed in the NT; Jesus was also an agent of reformation. And reform is needed in the world today. Study the word of God, worship in spirit and truth, and walk humbly with God. The root problems of contemporary society are the same root problems of biblical times. Humanity caters to its own preferences over the will of God.

Today's Scripture is a very significant prophetic offer of hope. God's promised redeemer will come from Bethlehem. You Bethlehem, from you will come the one who is to rule in Israel for God, to stand and feed the flock of God, in the strength of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord. He will be great to the ends of the earth and he will be an agent of peace. This prophecy from Micah fits Jesus perfectly. In Matthew chapter 2 when the magi look for Jesus, the chief priests and scribes know the answer is Bethlehem. There is a golden thread woven throughout Bible that binds it all together into amazing unity that points to one great person who will bless the whole world. Micah specifically points out he will be born in Bethlehem.