

Micah 7:1-7

1 Woe is me! For I have become like one who, after the summer fruit has been gathered, after the vintage has been gleaned, finds no cluster to eat; there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger. 2 The faithful have disappeared from the land, and there is no one left who is upright; they all lie in wait for blood, and they hunt each other with nets. 3 Their hands are skilled to do evil; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire; thus they pervert justice. 4 The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of their sentinels, of their punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand. 5 Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace; 6 for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household. 7 But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.

Who likes waiting? It is often frustrating. People hate waiting in line, or waiting on a slow computer, being placed on hold while on the telephone, or getting behind a school bus. Advent is a time of waiting in anticipation of the arrival of Jesus. When we wait on the Lord, we don't sit idle and let our lights go out, we put our talents to work, and conduct the Lord's mission here on earth until he arrives. We wait in hope and anticipation for the arrival of the Lord. It is God's plan to bring salvation to the world. Today is the first Sunday of Advent and the theme for today is hope.

Micah was a prophet in Jerusalem at a very difficult time. He called for social and religious reform. He is burdened because he sees that the theological significance of the events that unfold around him is due to sin. It is because of the injustice to the poor that Samaria suffered oppression and fell to Assyria. The destruction is because of their wickedness, idolatry, and social injustice. As a true prophet of God, he has to deliver the word of God. It is a message that he must bear when the people don't want to hear it. God disapproves of the corruption, unethical religious practices, wickedness, idolatry, and social injustice. Religious reform is urgently needed. The wrath of God is coming for the disobedient nation and will destroy Jerusalem because it has corrupted the worship of the Lord.

Micah looks at society and laments there is not one good person that is upright. The poor are exploited. The rich are guilty of extortion. The powerful abuse everyone else. There is wide spread violence. The merchants take advantage of others. The judges are corrupt and pervert justice with bribes. Prophets and priests are saying what people want to hear. Rulers are living a life of luxury. Micah also criticizes the underprivileged victims for their lack of devotion to God. His theological interpretation is that all of these events mean that disaster is coming for the Jews. They will pay for their sins when invaders come to destroy Judah and Jerusalem.

The prophet sees the day of punishment is at hand. Terrible events are soon to come. He laments for a desperate society that has reached such a despondent state that nothing is left. The righteous have perished leaving the wicked free to abuse and corrupt. He associates his findings with a metaphor of hungry person in an orchard that cannot find one piece of fruit. I hope you notice the parallelism of the events of the day vs. past events. The faithful have disappeared from

the land and there being no one left who is upright is the exact same problem of the great flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

I find it very interesting how the lessons of the Bible are applicable to things that happen today. The nature of people does not change. We commit the very same problems. We have learned the lessons and we should know better just like the people in Micah's time had the lessons and should have known better. Micah, like the other prophets, and Jesus, puts the Lord's will in perspective. God is not interested in burnt offerings as a sacrifice for transgression just so that a person can pay the penalty and repeat the offence. The Lord requires justice, kindness, and humility. Worship is an act that is pleasing to God when people demonstrate justice, kindness, and humility. Social justice and appropriate worship go hand in hand together. It is both worship and mission to the needy that pleases the Lord. With all the doom and gloom in society, Micah still has hope. He watched in hope for the Lord. He trusted in God. He knew that God's plan is the Messiah. He chose not to be like the world. He put his trust in God. We can tell people about what God has done for us and show them why we choose to believe. The changed life surrenders fear, worry, despair, anger, hatred, and stress for the glory of God.

Hope lies in the future as God will respond and mercy will be exercised. It is God's intention to reclaim God's people. After the doom comes salvation. God will give the people a clean slate, a fresh start, and a hopeful future. The Lord gives us peace, calm in the storms of life, and strength to endure the challenges of the world. The ultimate hope is in the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. It is up to each individual to focus on your relationship with Lord. But as for me I will look to the Lord.