

God Delights in Deliverance

Micah 5:1-4 on August 11, 2024

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Please read Micah 5:1-4 before going further in this transcript.

For the past 2 Sundays, we've been looking at what Micah has to say about "What God Hates." For today and next Sunday, we're going to consider "What God Delights In." I've got to admit, this change of topic was certainly a breath of fresh air for me this week. Both topics are vital, but it's nice to get through some of the tougher sledding, and move on to the more uplifting stuff!

First, a quick review; last week we ended on Micah 3:12, "Therefore because of you [corrupt leaders], Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets." This prophecy was later fulfilled in 586 BC, when the Babylonians captured and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Micah 4:9-10 picks up on this theme of Jerusalem's fall, "Why do you now cry aloud—have you no king? Has your ruler perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor? 10 Writhe in agony, Daughter Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies." So even in the midst of this message of judgment, God makes sure that Micah includes a message of deliverance. God delights in deliverance.

If we're truly devoted to God's love and goodness, then we must learn to delight in the things in which God delights.

Over the past two Sundays, we've been challenged to hate the things that God hates; for the next two Sundays, we're now going to be challenged to delight in the things in which God delights. God Delights in Deliverance.

The book of Micah can be divided into 3 main sections, 3 Cycles of Judgment/Deliverance:^{1 2}

Micah 1-2: Chapters 1-2 begin with a warning of JUDGMENT against the northern and southern cities of Samaria and Jerusalem, and then they end with a message of DELIVERANCE.

Micah 3-5: We looked at Micah 3 last week, which begins with a warning of JUDGMENT against Israel's corrupt leaders, but then chapters 4-5 share a prophecy of future DELIVERANCE.

¹ See overview in intro to Micah, *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 1500-1501.

² The Bible Project has a helpful overview video of Micah's message. Check it out here:
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/micah/>

Micah 6-7: Chapters 6-7 begin by explaining that God's JUDGMENT is the direct result of peoples' sin, and then close with words of trust and praise, for God's merciful DELIVERANCE.³

Today we're going to briefly touch on these 1st 2 cycles, focusing on the Deliverance portions, and then we'll look at the 3rd cycle next week. Even though God's righteous and holy character demand judgment, God still delights in deliverance.

But how about you and me: Do we delight in deliverance?
(We'll come back to this question, after we've looked at the text.)

Two weeks ago, we began in Micah 1 by looking at how God hates idolatry. And we saw how the LORD came down as a Divine Warrior to judge people's sin. We went on to see how God hates rebellion against His ways, and how He hates falsehood, and the perversion of true religion. But we didn't quite make it to the end of Micah 2.

1) God delights in gathering His sheep together and breaking open the way for their deliverance.

Micah 2:12-13 says, "I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. 13 The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."⁴ So even after spending the first 2 chapters highlighting all of the sin and wickedness among His people, God still delights in delivering them. It hadn't happened yet in Micah's day, but God already has plans in His heart to make it happen. God will exile His people to Babylon, but He will not leave them there forever. In spite of their idolatry and rebellion, He will not forget them nor abandon them forever.⁵

Verse 12 reveals that God has the heart of a loving shepherd. He longs to bring His flock back together, so the remnant of Israel will be brought back to Jerusalem, and they will rebuild once again. "The place will *throng* with people," meaning it will *be filled* with people once again.

³ Romans 11:22 reminds us to, "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness...." Also consider Romans 2:4.

⁴ Due to Micah's sudden change of topic in Micah 2:12-13, without providing us with any clear context, various scholars have understood these verses differently. Some understand them as being fulfilled when Jerusalem was delivered from Sennacherib's attack, others when God's people were restored from Babylonian exile, and still others when God's people experience their final deliverance at the end of human history. Kenneth L. Barker, *The New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 70.

⁵ As we read earlier from Micah 4:10, "...there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies."

Now verse 13 mentions 3 titles: “The One who breaks open the way,” “Their King,” and “the LORD.” As it turns out, these 3 are all one and the same. This is a reference to their Deliverer, who will lead His people back to Jerusalem. Their Shepherd will break through the gate of Babylon and go up before them, then they themselves will break through the gate right behind Him and go out with Him.⁶ Verses 12-13 are immediately followed by the corrupt leaders that we looked at last week in Micah 3. So this strong and loving leader stands in stark contrast. Rather than using His power for corrupt purposes, the LORD uses His power for good, to break His people out of captivity. The Israelite captivity in Babylon, can be seen as a word picture for our own captivity today. And their deliverance from captivity, can be seen as a picture of how our Good Shepherd can deliver us, from what holds us captive.

For some of us, verse 13 brings to mind the song “Reckless Love,” by Cory Asbury. I know some people don’t care for this song because of its use of the word “reckless” when describing God’s love. So to be clear, God’s love is NOT reckless in terms of it being careless or irresponsible. However, after all of the sinful wandering that we’ve done, you’ve got to admit that it’s pretty amazing that God still lovingly pursues us. So maybe we do need a different word than “reckless,” but before we “throw the baby out with the bathwater,” let’s at least consider the biblical accuracy of some of the other lyrics. The song begins...

“Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God
Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the 99.
And I couldn't earn it, I don't deserve it, still You give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.

When I was Your foe, STILL Your love fought for me
You have been so, so good to me
When I felt no worth, You paid it all for me
You have been so, so kind to me

There's no shadow You won't light up
Mountain You won't climb up
Coming after me
There's no wall You won't kick down
Lie You won't tear down
Coming after me”

In Micah 2:13, God portrays Himself as, “The One who breaks open the way.” The *ESV* translates it, “He who opens the breach.” Do you know how

⁶ Isaiah 1:9 talks about how the Lord Almighty left some survivors. This verse is later quoted in Romans 9:29. God will reserve a remnant that will survive His judgment.

you open a breach in a wall? With a battering ram! So let's give thanks today that our God Delights in Deliverance! Yes, there are times when He waits for the prodigal son to return, but there are other times, when He comes after us, even though we have gone after sin. He kicks down walls to set us free from our captivity. God delights in delivering us from whatever holds us captive, and He enjoys being the leader of our lives, if we will simply follow along behind Him.

With this in mind, it's no surprise that...

2) God delights in sending His Heavenly King to deliver us from sin.

Right on the heels of judging Israel's corrupt leaders in Micah 3, Micah 4-5 then go on to predict God's future deliverance, through an incorruptible leader, a mighty shepherd from the line of David, a Heavenly King who will be born in Bethlehem. Micah 4:1 begins, "In the last days...." Micah 4:6 then follows with a section on, "In that day...." Usually in contexts like this, the phrase "In the last days" refers to the coming, future Messianic age.⁷ In other words, despite the fact that Jerusalem and the temple would be decimated by the Babylonians, Micah now prophecies of a future time, when the city of Zion will not only be fully restored, but it will be better than ever.^{8 9 10 11} We don't have time to sort through all of chapter 4 today, but it does help us to know that these future predictions are what sets up the context for what follows in Micah 5.

⁷ See Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 83.

⁸ Verse 2 says that "Many nations will come," meaning that both Jews and Gentiles will worship there together, and learn about the LORD together. "Mountain of the LORD" (Mount Zion) "occurs in passages that depict the coming of both Jews and Gentiles to Jerusalem (Zion) in the last days." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1119 footnote on Isaiah 2:2-4.

⁹ Consider Psalm 48. Jerusalem "was first exalted when David brought the ark of the covenant there (symbolizing the throne of King Yahweh among his kingdom people) and when Solomon built "the LORD's temple" there. But the time will come when it will be even more exalted as the most important mountain of all." Kenneth L. Barker, *New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 83.

¹⁰ So even though Micah 3:12 prophecies the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Micah 4 reveals that "in the Zion of the future it will be restored in even grander style to become the worship and learning center for all nations." *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1505 footnote on Micah 4:1-5.

¹¹ We could get into some fairly complex and controversial discussions here regarding God's future plans for the nation of Israel, and End Times prophecy and its fulfillment, BUT... we're not going to do that. Instead, we're going to stay focused on our topic of the things in which God delights.

Micah 5:1 begins by predicting an attack on Jerusalem, “Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.”^{12 13 14} The prophet Micah is highlighting the incredible vulnerability of Israel at this time in history. The “city of troops” in verse 1 is a reference to Jerusalem. And this call to “marshal your troops” is a call to prepare for the siege that is about to be laid against Jerusalem. However, Israel is in a season of apostasy and open rebellion against God, so they don’t have the king that they need.¹⁵ Israel’s earthly king will soon be overthrown by his enemies. To be clear, this reference to being struck on the cheek isn’t about Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 5 to turn the other cheek. The context here is about a weak earthly king; the enemy armies are attacking, and this humiliated ruler can’t even defend himself, much less his own people.¹⁶

The Heavenly King introduced in Micah 5:2 stands in stark contrast, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,¹⁷ though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” The people’s hope did not come from the great and mighty city of Jerusalem in verse 1, but rather from the small little rural town of Bethlehem in verse 2.¹⁸ Bethlehem was the birthplace of a humble shepherd boy named David. Despite his meek origins, David became Israel’s greatest earthly king.¹⁹ Bethlehem ultimately points to Jesus, who was also born there, and who became a much greater king, even than King David.²⁰

¹² The context for Micah 4-5 is a prophecy about future deliverance. So as we look at verses 1-4, we’ll see a transition from Israel’s helpless earthly king, to their strong and capable Heavenly King. “from helpless ruler to ideal King.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1506 footnote on Micah 5:1-4.

¹³ The three literary units, Micah 4:9-10,11-13; and 5:1-4, “all begin with the Hebrew word for ‘now’ and end with an assertion that the present or anticipated bad situation will be changed for the better.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, pp. 1505-1506 footnote on Micah 4:9-10.

¹⁴ “The siege against the citizens of Jerusalem could refer to that of King Sennacherib’s Assyrian army in 701 B.C. But it more likely refers prophetically to that of King Nebuchadnezzar’s Neo-Babylonian army 588-586. If so, the ultimate reference of Israel’s (i.e., Judah’s) ‘ruler’ probably would be to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar blinded by having his soldiers quite literally ‘strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod’ (see 2 Kings 25:1-7).” Kenneth L. Barker, *The New American Commentary: Micah*, Broadman, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 95.

¹⁵ Even though Micah gives such a demoralizing picture of their earthly kings humiliation, he does have a message of good news for those who are willing to place their hope and trust in God. See Leslie C. Allen, *NICOT: The Books of Joel...and Micah*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976, p. 342.

¹⁶ *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1812 footnote on Micah 5:1.

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 17:12 says “David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah.” “EF ruh thuh” W. Murray Severance and Terry Eddinger, *That’s Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 65.

¹⁸ Not from the city of David, but from the town of David.

¹⁹ Well before the thought of a divided kingdom had even crossed their minds.

²⁰ Earlier, Micah 4:8 foresees that “The kingdom of David will be restored under the Messiah.” *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011, p. 1505 footnote on Micah 4:8.

The end of verse 2 describes this Heavenly King as One “whose origins are from of old, from ancient times,” which further indicates that this verse is pointing to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Although He was born in Bethlehem, He has existed with the Father and the Spirit, since eternity past.²¹ We normally talk about Micah 5:2 during the Christmas season. Matthew 2:1-6 says, “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “ ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’” So Matthew’s quotation here, reveals that Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy from Micah 5:2.

Micah 5:3-4 go on, “Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. 4 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.” So verse 3 highlights the fact that for 600 years or so, from the time of Israel’s exile to the birth of Christ, Israel would have no king.²² There’s a dimension here between verses 3-4 of “the now and not yet.” The fact is, it’s difficult to be sure exactly what is being referred to at the end of verse 3, by “the rest of his brothers [returning] to join the Israelites.” (*Scholars have various suggestions.*)²³ Be that as it may, we now know that Jesus will come to earth in 2 stages, His 1st coming at Christmas, and His 2nd coming to rule in majesty for eternity. His 2nd coming is likely what the end of verse 4, and the verses that follow, are referring to.²⁴ ²⁵ It will be a time of unrivaled peace, when our Heavenly King will finally rule and reign over all things forever and ever. God delights in sending His Heavenly King to deliver us from sin. The only reason that verse 4 can promise that “they will live *securely*” is that it’s predicting how our sin problem would be dealt with at the cross.

²¹ This King existed “much earlier than His human birth.” See John 8:58, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

²² “Israel was without a king from her exile to the birth of Christ.” *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1812 footnote on Micah 5:3.

²³ It’s difficult to be certain what the end of verse 3 means by “and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.” I suppose taken literally, it could refer to Acts 1 when Jesus’ brothers join the early church, after finally accepting the half-brother Jesus as their Messiah.

²⁴ I’m speaking here from a premillennial view, those with an amillennial or postmillennial view of the future would likely disagree.

²⁵ The Assyrians in verse 5 are likely symbolic of God’s enemies, which also helps us date this prophecy to Micah’s time. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1813 footnotes on Micah 5:5-6.

Bible Commentator Peter Craigie says it this way, “Jesus...is above all a gift of God to this world. To those who feel shut in on every side, like the besieged citizens of Jerusalem who first heard these words, Jesus brings the prospect of deliverance and security. And that is the essence of the Christmas message: God makes a gift to a besieged world, through whom deliverance may come.”²⁶

Well, now that we’ve looked at today’s text, it leaves us with a question: How about you and me: Do we delight in deliverance?

3) Do we delight in deliverance the way God does?

At the recent opening ceremony for the summer Olympics in Paris, there was a rather scandalous image of some men dressed in drag. Some people believe it may have even been a crude and offensive reenactment of Leonardo da Vinci’s, “The Last Supper.” Whether or not that was the case, there has been a broad range of reactions to this picture, including a broad range of reactions from various Christians:

- Some have ignored it and simply moved on. (What do you expect? It’s the French!)
- Others have been deeply offended, and have called for retribution. (If you’ve done any surfing on social media lately, it seems as though some people would prefer that God would pour out His JUDGMENT on these offenders!)
- Still others have suggested that we extend grace. (Yes we should hate what God hates, and God hates it when we reject His good and perfect design for men and women. And yet, what would it look like, if we were to “delight in deliverance the way that God does?” How might this perspective inform our response to those who offend us?)

Now I’m guessing that some people may be offended that I’m even posing such an option. After all, sin is sin. And God hates sin. Isn’t that what we’ve been talking about for the past 2 weeks!? Aren’t we supposed to hate what God hates! Well... yes. That’s absolutely true, or I wouldn’t have preached it. And yet, we serve a God who delights in people’s deliverance, not in their destruction. So we need to be careful that we don’t act like the Old Testament prophet Jonah, who rooted for destruction, rather than rooting for God’s grace and compassion. Let’s also keep in mind the time when Jesus rebuked two of His disciples, James and John, for asking if they could destroy the Samaritan village because it didn’t welcome Christ. Luke 9:54-55 says, “When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them.” (*Meaning He rebuked His disciples for having this kind of a response.*)

²⁶ Peter C. Craigie, *Twelve Prophets*, Westminster, Philadelphia, PA, 1985, p. 40.

Verses like these should compel us to communicate the whole message of the gospel. Yes, God hates sin. But, He also delights in delivering people from that sin. God delights in healing broken sinners, and in shepherding them forward on the right path. You know, there's probably even some wisdom and strategy, to leading with the things that God delights in, rather than going straight for the jugular, with what He hates. It needs to be clear to the watching world, that Christians delight in deliverance the way that God does, that people don't just always hear about what Christians are against. That's not to say we can't talk about the things that God hates, but these two must be held in tension. They must both inform our attitude and our response toward sinners. Back in Romans 2:4 we considered how God's kindness is intended to lead us to repentance. That's worth keeping in mind. God delights in people's deliverance, not in their destruction.

Ezekiel 33:11 reveals God's heart, "... 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! ...'" 2 Peter 3:9 agrees, "... [The Lord] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." God doesn't want anyone to perish, even those who are trapped in sin, and broken by sin, and corrupted by its deceitfulness. In fact, His grace extends so far, that God doesn't even want the people to perish, who are currently embracing sin, and celebrating it, and promoting it to others.²⁷ So it's fine to be outraged by sin, but any outrage that we feel, should be mitigated not only by the grace that we ourselves have received as unworthy sinners, but also by our understanding, that God delights in deliverance.

Now, I could go on and on, about how God delights in deliverance... so I think I will! John 3:17 says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." Titus 2:11 states it plainly, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people." 1 Timothy 2:3-4 talks about, "... God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Friend, do we want what God wants?

Do we delight in deliverance the way God does?

²⁷ Romans 1:32 comes to mind.