

Monday, July 29, 2019—Micah 1-4

The Titanic was billed as an unsinkable ship. Its size and grandeur made it seem otherworldly and invincible. While the passengers on its inaugural voyage went about their revelry, the ship sailed through icy waters and collided with an iceberg that brought the ship down.

Micah prophesied to both the northern capital of Samaria and the southern capital of Jerusalem. He observed the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—two good kings bookending a terrible one (2 Kings 16-18)—and their subjects, and he grieved what he saw coming. While living in economic and military ease, the people were idolatrous and would suffer the consequences. God will not stand idly by as His people rebel.

The heart condition of the people was evident in how they treated one another (2:1-2, 8-10; 3:1-3). They were selfish and unmerciful. There was no grace extended to the poor and needy. No one wanted to believe what Micah was predicting (2:6), yet he knew God would act to purge His people and His land of this evil. God would not discipline in order to completely crush His people but in order to refine and restore (2:12-13).

Micah shared these truths not because they were popular but because he was filled with the Spirit (3:8). He had to call out the leaders who were misleading the people and misunderstanding God (3:10-11). One day God would restore His people to power, and they would take all their bounty and give it to Him in worship (4:13).

Thank God for the day when all will be well. Though the world worships idols, choose each day to follow the Lord alone (4:5).

Sunday, July 28, 2019—Isaiah 64-66

Distance runners work on their pacing so they can endure the race and finish strong. Nothing is worse than training for a race and not being able to finish. Finishing with a burst of speed and strength is the goal.

Isaiah continued to worship and confess as his prophecy neared its close. He saw God in His majesty. “For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no

eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for Him! You welcome those who cheerfully do good, who follow godly ways" (64:4-5). In response, he confessed Israel's sin and frailty (64:5-8). God, however, remained gracious, and Isaiah prayed He would act.

God indeed saw their sin and likened them to a cluster of bad grapes. There were a few good ones in the bunch, so He would pluck those and not destroy them (65:8). That remnant would escape the destruction but not necessarily the pain of the judgment He was sending. In the end, He would provide a place of great joy for His people (65:17-25).

God knows His greatness and the inability of any human hand to create anything as good as what He already has. He is not looking for outward actions that astound. He is looking inwardly. "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word" (66:2b).

Pray for daily renewal in your heart to run the race of faith with integrity and joy. Pray for a life that honors God to the very end.

Saturday, July 27, 2019—Isaiah 61-63

The 24-hour news cycle points out bad news far more than good. There is something about bad news that draws viewers which attracts advertisers. It often seems that people want bad news to come.

Isaiah was giving his people a glimpse of the future and hope for better days. There was good news of great joy for the poor, brokenhearted, and captives. The sad and mournful would find joy and freedom (61:1-7). "For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them" (61:8). He was going to remove their shame and give them honor, and the world would come to praise Him. Good news indeed!

This thought stirred Isaiah to pray without ceasing (62:1). He could not wait for the day when God restored His city and glorified Himself. No longer would Jerusalem be seen as forsaken or God's people as ridiculous. They would be God's delight and united with Him again (62:2-5). God was announcing He was

marching in with salvation (63:1).

Is there any wonder that Jesus chose this message to begin His public ministry? When He unrolled the scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth and read (see Luke 4), He said He Himself was the One God had chosen to proclaim this good news. Praise Him today for His deliverance, mercy, and pardon (63:7-19). He has brought salvation by His own hand, and He deserves all the credit and glory.

Friday, July 26, 2019—Isaiah 58-60

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus said there would be a day when people would call Him “Lord” and point to the things they did for Him—prophecy, driving out demons, even miracles. He will say to them, “I never knew you. Depart from me.” Actions are one thing. Motives are another.

God saw this same flaw in Isaiah’s audience. They made of show of coming to God and of fasting, and they then asked God to act on their behalf and wondered why He wasn’t impressed. “I will tell you why! It’s because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting” (58:3b). They had the outward appearance of piety, but their lives were not marked by holy living and godly character. God wanted to see them free the oppressed and feed the hungry. This “others” focus was His goal for them.

He was not too weak to save them or too deaf to hear them (59:1). The problem was their sin. They no longer delighted in Him but in their sinful desires and pleasures. “It is because of all this evil that deliverance is far from us. That is why God doesn’t punish those who injure us” (59:9a).

The only solution was for God Himself to step in and save them (59:16-17). Then, their glory would shine to all nations living in darkness, drawing them to Jerusalem and bringing glory to God (60:1-3). Pray for a humble spirit that admits faults and repents for the glory of God. Pray for a heart motivated to glorify Him in personal worship and outward action.

Thursday, July 25, 2019—Isaiah 55-57

In the Garden, Adam and Eve had everything they needed for life and abundance. Their downfall came when they doubted the word of God. He had

given them the ability to choose whether they trusted Him and would live by His commands or whether they believed the serpent's lies.

Through Isaiah, God calls His people once again to listen to His word and to see its ability to bring abundance. He calls them to repentance (55:6-7) and to see that He works in ways that are unlike theirs (55:8-9). Just as rain and snow fall to the ground and eventually bring produce, so His word to them can bring the joy and peace they seek (55:10-13).

He works in different ways, and He calls His people to different ways. They truly find blessing (56:1-2) when they live by His standards, and He wants to share those blessings with the nations and outcasts (56:3-8). He wants the world to see His glory and worth through the empowered, blessed lives of those who live by His ways and trust in His word. What He started in the Garden is available to all who have faith.

God was fully aware of the sin Adam and Eve had committed. He was also fully aware of the rebellion of Israel (57:3-14). Nonetheless, He called them back. He promised to refresh those who repented (57:15).

Praise God for the power and promise of His word. Pray for daily repentance from wandering and courage to walk in faith and obedience.

Wednesday, July 24, 2019—Isaiah 52-54

"I have a dream!" Martin Luther King, Jr., shared these famous words from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. He saw a day coming when the oppressed and outcast would find justice and abundance. He galvanized a movement and stirred the hopes of many who longed for that day.

What Isaiah was promising may have seemed like a dream. For some, they could see the rising threat of Babylon and the punishment for sin Israel was about to endure. Others may have thought Isaiah was seeing something that would never come to pass. Nonetheless, Isaiah shared.

Jerusalem was going to fall into captivity by foreign hands, but God was going to deliver her and restore His people. The ones who declared this salvation and restoration would be messengers of good news (52:7). God would be their

guide and their rear guard (52:12), and the nations would see the glory of God once again.

This complete restoration would be the result of the work of His Suffering Servant (52:13-53:12). He would carry the weaknesses and sorrows of Israel and bear the curse of death for their sins, allowing God's people to be declared righteous (53:11). As a result, God would give Him the name above every name. Isaiah saw the glory of the coming of Jesus.

The people would not only be righteous once again but would be in an intimate relationship with God (54:5). Honor would replace shame, and victory would replace defeat. Vindication would come from God.

Praise God for the present and coming victory we have in Jesus.

Tuesday, July 23, 2019—Isaiah 49-51

God calls His people to be messengers of rescue and reconciliation. Isaiah knew this humbling, powerful truth. Though he felt his prophetic ministry had been a waste (49:4), God assured Isaiah that He had called him before birth to call Israel back and be a light to the nations (49:6).

This message of love and restoration will often come to people who are suffering and struggling and who, therefore, believe God has forgotten them or stopped loving them (49:14). God's messengers have the responsibility and privilege of proclaiming the good news—God has never left them or stopped loving them. In fact, He bears them up in their suffering (49:21). In time, He saves His own and punishes His enemies.

God's servants awaken each morning with His call on their lives to know His will and share His message (50:4). His servants are willing to endure suffering because they have set their faces like stone toward accomplishing His will, knowing He will bring justice (50:6-8). They remember they are cut from a righteous Rock and preceded by faithful examples who became great because of their faith in Him (51:1-2).

His servants are prone, because of human weakness and distraction, to fear those who are frail like they yet exhibit strength and speak threats (51:12-13).

When His people remember His greatness and His goodness, they will gladly and urgently tell His story of reconciliation.

Praise God for calling you to share His story. Pray for the opportunity to tell the good news today.