

Sunday Service 13th September 2020 Links, Information & Details to Connect

Revd Andy West Preaching: The more you have, the more you want

Micah 2 verses 1-11



Some of these links will not become 'Live' until around 10.15 am on Sunday to encourage us to meet together virtually for Morning Worship.

If you are aware of any friends or family that would like to be included in our mailout each week - please ask them to get in touch with Lizzy our Administrator at this email address. There might be members that you are aware of that are not receiving updates - if so, again please ask them to get in touch with us. Everyone is so important to us and it is lovely to make new connections or renew old ones.

Welcome - <https://youtu.be/Q-IQnd56fCE>

Worship -

In Christ alone - Amazing Grace - Trust & Obey - Before the throne of God

https://youtu.be/FtWwy0s_fjM

Kids worship - Thank you Lord - <https://youtu.be/73kN9bSs9c0>

Kids talk - Generosity -<https://youtu.be/9M35lgPsHiY>

Sermon <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFqHRz0KKcU>

Prayers - <https://youtu.be/6H5ue-4UYFA> (Paul and Marian)

Benediction <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHpCIqs5HjA>

Revd Meghan Byerly: Focus on Prayer: Journals and Jars- <https://youtu.be/PLhGulJrLa0>

Revd Andy West – Sermon Notes:

The more you have, the more you want

Micah 2 verses 1-11

In Tony's great start to our sermon series on Micah last week he pointed out that God had had enough of the sinful, disobedience of His people and was giving notice that they would not continually get away with it. The challenge as Tony put it was to get our house sorted out, to get our lives in order, ready for the coming of the Lord.

Micah doesn't take his foot off the gas this week and starts to point to specific sin which God is not happy about. The particular focus in chapter two is greed and covetousness which led to the taking of fields and houses in verse 2, coats in verse 8 and the driving from their homes of women and children in verse 9.

Now my immediate question was how can this happen? What kind of society is it when land and homes can just be taken like this from someone else?

Well it appears that there was a wealthy class who controlled the power structures of their society which allowed them to get richer at the expense of others, namely the poor. Despite already being rich there was a group of people who just wanted more and because they held the power then they could make it happen.

Now unfortunately this still happens around the world today with large companies being able to take the land of indigenous peoples because the companies have the money and influence to make it happen. Governments in some countries drive particular ethnic groups from their homes to the advantage of more favoured groups and it is always the powerless and the poor who are most at risk. Sadly, it is often too, the women and children who are most vulnerable.

In Exodus 20:17 God clearly states in the 10th commandment

'You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.'

It cannot be clearer; you shall not covet anything that belongs to someone else. For a society to have reached such a low point where the very opposite of this command was legitimised, angered God and it still angers God today. The commandment has not changed and neither has God.

God's response to such covetousness then is outlined in verses 3 & 4.

Therefore, the Lord says:

I am planning disaster against this people,
from which you cannot save yourselves.

You will no longer walk proudly,
for it will be a time of calamity.

⁴In that day people will ridicule you;
they will taunt you with this mournful song:

“We are utterly ruined;
my people's possession is divided up.

He takes it from me!

He assigns our fields to traitors.”

The very thing which they have been guilty of will happen to them; all their wealth and possession will be taken away from them. This will actually take place when the Assyrians invade and take over the land.

The rich and powerful's response to Micah is not one of repentance as they recognise their greed and covetousness but of denial and rebuke to Micah. In verse 6 they say:-

‘Do not prophesy,’ their prophets say.

‘Do not prophesy about these things;
disgrace will not overtake us.’

So what relevance does this have to us some 2700 years later, living in a prosperous part of the world but in a society where there is the rule of law imperfect as it may be, to protect from fraud, theft and bullying.

Let's go back to verse 1 to help us reflect on this.

Woe to those who plan iniquity,
to those who plot evil on their beds!

At morning's light they carry it out
because it is in their power to do it.

Having identified the sin which is being highlighted in Micah chapter 2, I would like briefly to bring three points out of this verse which I hope will help us respond to it.

1. What are you thinking about?

The starting place for any sin is in our thought process; what we fix our minds on. Micah says it's what you think about and how you think when everything else stops and you're on your own, last thing at night for example, which will impact how you live the next day. What are your hopes, lusts, longings which you dwell on and which will motivate your actions?

Jesus knew that it is what is in our hearts which will affect how we live and says in Matthew 15:19 'For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.'

When he tells the story of the wealthy farmer, Jesus says in Luke 12

17 He **thought** to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops."

18 "Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

Note how much of this is going on internally. He thought to himself, he said to himself and this thought process drove his actions which ultimately led to God saying to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you."

So we need to reflect of what our minds are thinking about? Are they helpful thoughts; God honouring, people honouring thoughts? Are our thoughts those which are likely to lead us into sin?

Paul's wise counsel to Timothy his younger fellow worker is useful for us to take note of. He says

2 Timothy 2:22

Flee the evil desires of youth.

Flee is a very strong, active, deliberate action. Don't dwell on, don't entertain thoughts which are sinful, run from them and then Paul continues with an equally strong word as he says pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

So, flee evil thoughts and pursue righteous thoughts. Be deliberate in guarding what we think about.

Paul very helpfully tells us in

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

2. Where are our actions leading? In verse 1 it continues 'At morning's light they carry it out'.

Even when a thought has been conceived in our minds, we still have a choice as to whether we put that thought, good or bad into action.

There has been great theological debate over the centuries as to when a thought becomes sin. Is the initial wrong thought when it pops into our minds sin or is it when we dwell on it and consider acting upon that thought that it becomes sin. We could spend a lot more time thinking about this but for us today looking at this passage let's simply say, when you

act on it, it is sin. Full stop. It has come out of your mind and created an action which is disobedient to the will of God.

And we have a choice as to whether we put ourselves in situations where we are more likely to sin. For example, I know a couple of people who are really nice people, that is until they consume alcohol and then they become very aggressive. This has led them to lose friends and one of them even to spend time in prison. Now knowing that alcohol has this effect on you, a sensible choice would be to avoid it altogether.

I have a friend who struggles with gambling and so he and his wife have an agreement that he doesn't handle the family finances. That way he is not tempted to waste the family resources on gambling.

So what sin are you prone to and what actions can you take to reduce your likelihood to enter into that sin. It could be you need to change where you go, who you meet, what you watch or be proactive and spend more time doing something which is helpful for strengthening you spiritually.

Perhaps you are prone to road rage. Be aware of that and surrender your journeys to God before your start and ask for the Holy Spirit to help you. Perhaps you like to gossip at work. Be deliberate about choosing to say positive things about people which build up rather than tear down. You know where you are most likely to sin. Rise to the challenge to break the habit.

3. What power do you have? In the verse we are looking at it says the people who were disobeying God and in danger of his wrath did it because it is in their power to do it. They were the ones who controlled the system and did so to their greedy advantage at the expense of the poor and vulnerable.

And I want to come back to this specific sin of covetousness which is encouraged in a world where we are bombarded with adverts which tell us we need this latest gadget, make up or kitchen. We need to think about its effect on the poor of the world and ask what power do we have to a) not be complicit in supporting exploitation and b) support that which is protecting and empowering the poor.

This again isn't a passive exercise. Are we careful not to take the resources of the world to supply our wants at the expense of others who have less control over their lives? On a worldwide scale it involves us being aware of what is going on in the world and learning about where are food, clothes and other commodities come from. For example, do we choose to buy fairly traded products where we can, avoid buying clothes made in sweat shops and food which has been grown on areas where rain forest has been cleared

Do we understand what climate justice is and the fact that climate change is affecting the poor and the marginalised already and will continue to do so more than the well off. Do we choose to make choices which reduce our own carbon footprint? It is great that the church building now has solar panels which will reduce the church's impact on the environment. Do we have an excess of clothes in our wardrobes or do we change our television, phone or car because we want to rather than because we need to?

We have heard that the coronavirus has affected ethnic minorities and the poor to a far greater extent than the rest of society. What is our personal response to this? Is there anything which we can do?

Do we know about and pray for fellow believers who are persecuted and imprisoned for their faith? Do we support organisations who help them?

These are all big questions and we may not be able to respond to all of them personally, but we cannot shut our minds to all of them. We live in a world that is now completely connected, where our actions in Sheffield can impact the lives of the poor and powerless in distant parts of the world.

We each are given responsibility and we have the power to make a difference. And because of this we have a challenge from God that we use our power to stand against injustice for the poor and powerless. How will you respond? If God was to search your heart in this respect would you be found wanting?

I would have to say yes, I would. I sometimes find the issue of justice for the poor and powerless overwhelming and too big an issue to be able to focus on one particular part. But this is not an excuse to do nothing. Just because we have the power to buy or do something doesn't mean we should. God's kingdom on earth is about acting justly and fairly and taking responsibility for the decisions we make. Micah will continue to emphasise this throughout the book.

The world operates on a more we have the more we want basis. The challenge of Micah is to be content and just. And here is the antidote to greed Listen to these few verses from the New Testament.

Philippians 4:12

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

1 Timothy 6:6

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'

The Cemetery Road Baptist Church Team sends all their love & blessings and hope that you can connect with us on Sunday

God Bless,

Revd Andy West, Revd Meghan Byerly, Pastor Tony Harris, Pastor John Maison, Farsi Support Mohsen Dehghan & Administrator Lizzy Levy.

