

*Ordinary
Things Matter*

*Devotions on
The Prophet Micah*

Louis Nel

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The Book of Micah

Micah Introduction

Audio

The one big question about the Bible is, what does the Lord want to imprint on me when I read His word? Have you thought about this before? One possible answer is that the Bible wants to tell me about my relationship with God, in other words, how to stand in the right relationship with Him. So this is about my spiritual life.

Of course, that is not all the Bible is about, and this is only partially

true, because the Bible is about much more than just my spiritual life. It's about my whole life! Take for example the book Song of Songs: this book is about your love life. Song of Songs is a very special poem that describes the love between a man and a woman.

The prophet Micah writes about the ordinary, everyday things of life, those things that happen every day at your work, where the business people discuss business, make smart plans and

complete business transactions. But in the same breath, Micah also writes about God, about what happens in the worship service on Sunday morning and all sorts of spiritual things. When we start reading Micah, we see how the ordinary everyday things are intertwined with our spiritual life. Ordinary things also become spiritual things at the same time.

I so want to separate my Sunday life from my Monday life. Sunday morning I put on my holy face when I go to church. Monday at

work, however, is a totally different picture! Micah wants to imprint on us that these two are inextricably woven together.

The prophet Micah wrote not only about the present life, but also about the future. He warns about God's judgment but at the same time he also tells of God's great grace and forgiveness.

Micah lived in a time of conflict and tension in Judah and Israel, as well as the nations around them. We must remember that the people at that time were

divided, the Ten Tribe or Israel, and the Southern Kingdom or Judah. At the same time the Assyrian Empire experienced a period of prosperity, which caused further tension. Because Israel did not want to stand under the yoke of Assyria, he entered into a coalition with Damascus. They tried to persuade Judah to be included in this coalition as well to make them stronger, but Judah, under the reign of King Jotham, refused. Consequently, Israel decides to attack Judah. Meanwhile, the Edomites and

Philistines also pose a great threat to Judah, and under the reign of Jotham's successor, Ahaz seeks help from Assyria. Israel is attacked by Assyria and eventually they become part of the Assyrian empire. Many Israelites are taken captive, and cities are destroyed.

The end was tragic, as Assyria's aid to Judah forced him to submit to Assyria. The worst thing, however, was that Judah was also subject to the Assyrian religion. They were forced to

acknowledge this idolatry. Moreover, they had to pay heavy taxes to the Assyrians. After the state treasury is stripped, the temple treasures are taken to pay for the Assyrians' lust for money. Very soon moral deterioration as well as a moral decay followed. Corruption has seeped in everywhere, even into the legal system and the prophetic ministry. These so-called "men of God" only prophesied to protect their own interests.

It is under these tragic

circumstances that the prophet Micah had to preach and bring the Word of God to the nation.

Micah, however, did not bring despair through his preaching. He did not lament, "Everything is lost!" Rather, he was trying to show that God is great. He sang the absolute greatness and omnipotence of God in order to make the people truly see God. He wanted the people to see that God was certainly not uninvolved. Indeed, He was intensely involved with His people. It was

very important to God what would happen to them. He cared for them, even though they fell into sin. Yes, of course He did not approve of what they did, and He condemned their sin. But He is also infinitely merciful, and He is willing to forgive.

At the same time, Micah also wanted to inspire the people to truly see their fellow-man. He talks about all the different levels of society: businessmen, judges and the church. Everything that happens there is equally

important. And he also addresses an evil that even today in 2021 still causes very big problems - materialism.

If it sounds to you like the book of Micah is just about judgment and sin and all that is bad and terrible, you are making a big mistake. Micah is a timeless book, and lets us look forward into the future. He lifts the veil on a wonderful future and eternal peace - peace under a new King who is not fallible like the earthly kings in Micah's time. Because Micah is timeless, the

book is still a book of hope for you and me today.

Prayer:

Lord, my prayer is that You will open our eyes to the wonderful hope that Micah brings us.

Micah from Moresheth

Micah 1: 1

Audio

Is it really important to read the first few lines of a Bible book? It's usually just a greeting or something! Nothing important... ..

Often there is much more locked up in such an introduction than it seems at first glance. A few words can often contain a great deal of information, which can be very important. It can give you information about the author, the

time the book was written, to whom it was addressed, and even what the book is about.

So we just casually read past the introduction to Micah's letter, and do not even think about it further. But let's take a closer look at what is in these first few “meaningless” lines and then reflect on the implications of this introduction.

The very first thing that strikes me is the first four words: “The Word of the Lord” Micah makes sure that he does not start with all kinds of knick-knacks, but that

every reader who picks up this book will know right from the first words that it is not the prophet Micah who speaks these things. These are not just a few thoughts he had about life. On the contrary: What is written in this book is the Word of the Lord that compelled him to record everything. The Holy Spirit therefore placed these things on Micah's heart. So when we read condemnations and rebukes, we must not take them lightly, because it is God's Word that speaks to the reader. Nor should

we dismiss it as something that Micah wrote for Samaria and Jerusalem alone, for God's Word is timeless and eternal, and the mere fact that this prophetic work was included as part of the Bible tells us today that we must take careful note of what is written here, and that we must also go and test our own lives on it.

First of all, it's probably important that we at least know who Micah really was. All this prophet says about himself is that he is Micah of Moresheth. Of course, that

does not mean he was in Moresheth when he wrote the book, but it does mean that he was from Moresheth. We often see this in the Bible, for example Simon of Serene. There were a few men named Simon (including Simon Peter), and to link his name to the town of his origin, he distinguished himself from other people with the same name. Micah made his statements in Jerusalem. The name Micah means, "Who is like the Lord?" Moresheth was a town about forty kilometers southwest of

Jerusalem.

We really know nothing about the prophet himself. He does not write about himself, and elsewhere in the Bible little is written about him. There are only a few quotes from his book, such as Matthew 2:6, where some of his prophetic words about Jesus are quoted. Then there is also a reference to Micah by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:18) where he says that Micah predicted that Zion would be ploughed like a field and that Jerusalem would become a

heap of ruins.

In other words, this book is not about Micah at all, but about what God has revealed to him. We often read in the preface of a book how the author is praised. This is very definitely not the case here. Micah stays totally in the background, this is the issue that stands out for him.

If we look further at the introduction to the book, we see that Micah links what he wrote to a specific period in history. There were specific kings who ruled at

that time, namely Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. And it's about specific places like Samaria and Jerusalem. It was not just prophecies hanging in the air, it was reality - historical situations. God's Word is not something that hangs in the air, far removed from our people. His Word is concrete, for specific people and specific circumstances.

Furthermore, we must also realize that God's Word is timeless, just like God Himself, and therefore it also has just as much to do with

our own specific circumstances today, 2700 years later. So when we read this book, it will definitely tell you and me today about our own lives and circumstances.

Furthermore, we can also see from this introduction that the book has a specific focus. It is about the capitals of the Northern Kingdom (Samaria) and Judea (Jerusalem). When the capital of a country is addressed, it refers to the whole country, because the country is controlled from the capital. In other words, Micah

addresses the two kingdoms under the rule of the Israelites.

And because this is a timeless prophecy, it also addresses South Africa today, and everyone who lives in this country as well as Australia and Britain, or wherever you may live.

Let us take the Word of God to heart, and listen to what Micah, the spokesman of the Holy God, wants to say to us.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Your holy Word which is timeless. Please

open up my heart to be receptive
to Your Word.

The Judge Is On His Way

Micah 1: 2-5

Audio

With trembling hands I opened the book of Micah to write a series of daily passages from it. I was scared, and I asked the Lord if I could not choose another, easier book. But He insisted that Micah be the book. What is it going to yield for you and me? I let my eyes wander over the pages, and all I could see was judgment, judgment, and again judgment. The Lord said to me,

"Look deeper!" And then I saw it - between the judgments precious gems lie hidden.

In the first few verses you stare blindly at the fear of God's judgment. But let's take a good look at the image that Micah paints for us there.

We see a courtroom. This is the Supreme Court, and the tension is running very high as everyone is waiting for the arrival of the Judge and the Prosecutor. What is going to happen in this court today? Everyone sitting there

feels guilty, because this Judge is the greatest of all time. The courtroom where we sit has a sacred atmosphere. Everyone is too scared to even whisper, because it could violate the sanctity of the awesome courtroom.

And then there is a whisper through the hall: “The Judge has left His office! He is on his way to the courtroom! ”

Micah describes the arrival of this Judge as breathtaking, impressive. When He leaves the

holiness of His "office" to come down, the mountains melt away before Him, for His holiness radiates in a glow that consumes everything before Him. Micah describes how He comes over the high places of the earth. In my mind I see Him approaching over the Alps and the Himalayas. The fearsome Mount Everest, which has claimed so many lives because it is almost impossible to climb, is for this Judge but like a stone under His foot. As He moves over it, the granite and snow melt away before His

holiness like wax that is cast into a hot fire melts away, so the mountains melt and flow down the slopes like water. The valleys tear open and crumble before the omnipotence of the Judge who is on His way.

For the unbeliever, it must be a frightening sight, because he knows what it will all mean for him. But for me as a believer, it fills me with awe, admiration, worship. The absolute greatness, omnipotence and holiness of the Judge does not fill me with fear

but with breathtaking wonder. Whenever I hear Him coming I want to fall down in worship and praise, because I know that He is on His way to address all the injustices.

But it also fills me with gratitude and new awe, because suddenly I realize that He is not just a God who is up there in heaven somewhere where no one can see Him. He is not uninvolved in the things that are happening here on earth. He is personally, intensely involved in everything

that goes on down below!

Now the tension in the large, lavish courtroom reaches breaking point, for the Judge has arrived. The splendour of His holiness fills the entire courtroom from corner to corner like a glorious fragrance. And then the surprising thing happens: the Judge is going to take the place where the prosecutor usually stands. This Judge is at the same time the Prosecutor. In a few words He sets the charge. But this accusation makes everyone

in the courtroom gasp for breath, for the accused are not, as everyone expects, the Assyrians or the Philistines. The accused are not the Wicked - those who murder and rob and plunge the whole world into mourning. The charge comes against "Jacob". Not the person of Jacob, but his descendants, the people of Israel. It is about the unfaithfulness of His people, the people of God.

No one expected it. Everyone was taken back by surprise over who is accused. Suddenly it is the

complainant who has to take his place in the dock. "But what did I do then?" we almost hear the accused protest.

Why should it be Israel, the people of God, that must stand before the judgment seat first? The answer is actually obvious. Through the ages, God put a lot of effort into this nation. They received preferential treatment right from day one. When they sinned, they were not wiped out, but God, by His great mercy, gave them another chance each time.

Just look at how they tested God's patience during the Exodus from Egypt. Just look at how God helped them with a loving hand every time they murmured and moaned.

You and I, as believers, must be careful that we do not end up in the dock. God asks us to pursue love and to serve Him. He does not force us to do that. If we continue to live stubbornly and follow our own minds, and rejoice in sin - won't God forgive us again ? There may come a day

when the Judge will turn around and say: “Now you are in the dock.” We do not want that to happen to us.

Prayer:

Lord, please help me to live for You every day - to live out love and do what You ask of me.

The Court is in Session

Micah 1: 6-16

Audio

The court is in session. The Judge takes the place of the Prosecutor. Then He points the finger at the two accused. "Who is responsible for the offence?" Then he looks at accused number one. "Samaria, after this court case I will make you into a heap of ruins in the open field!" We see Samaria turn white in the face - his knees want to buckle under him. "The indictment against

Samaria" the Prosecutor continues, "is prostitution!"

Everyone present in the courtroom gasps for breath. "How horrible!" the whispering echoes through the hall.

In the pagan world of that time, the so-called "nature religions" were surely the most popular among the people, because here they could live out their wildest fantasies to their heart's content without feeling guilty about it. After all, it went by the name of religion, and therefore they were

partly obliged to take part in all the disgusting sexual practices. Here were even temple prostitutes who were employed by the temple! Prostitution was practised as part of the religious practice.

Do you still remember the great debacle at that time during the soccer world cup, when some high-ranking people in politics tried to legalize prostitution in South Africa? They argued that it was just to make it more attractive to the millions of tourists who

would flock to the country. Eventually, after much pressure from the churches, it was not legalised, but I am positive that at that time a blind eye was turned to any activities of the street women and men. Today, of course, prostitution is illegal in our country, but it continues to be an extremely lucrative business.

The charge against Samaria is, that he has fallen into prostitution. The charge, however, lies much deeper than this outward, disgusting sin. Prostitution was

actually the result of pagan idolatry. In the very first commandment, God warns his people that they may have no other gods. Then He goes on to say that they are not allowed to make any images to worship them either. God therefore demands of His people that they may worship Him and Him only. And now they have come and secretly smuggled in idolatry. They still put up the front as "People of God" and they boast that they are unique and that they are the only people in the world

who worship this God only. They are very quick to show how pious they live, and that they obey the laws of purity, will not eat a single bite of pork, and faithfully keep the Sabbath. But when dark falls, they hang around where the street women are operating, delighting in the orgies that are practised in the name of religion.

The judge's damning verdict on Samaria is that he will be totally destroyed. The idols will be smashed to pieces and the building blocks will be scattered in

the valley. Even the city's foundations will be excavated.

However, the problem had disturbing consequences, because as Covid 19 spread like wildfire, so this "virus" of Samaria's sin also spread rapidly and infected the whole environment. And the disease is incurable!

The Prosecutor now turns to accused number two, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the "Holy City", also lost it's holiness. Now he is also guilty of the same charges. If it

was only limited to Jerusalem, then there might still be hope, but now it has also spread to all the small towns in the area. Therefore, the judgment of the Judge is not only that Jerusalem will fall, but all of Judah with him.

One by one the Prosecutor mentions the names of the villages that made them guilty of this abomination: Gath, Beth-Leaphrah, Shaphir, Zaanan, Bethazel, Maroth. Then He looked Lachish in the eye and shook His head. Lachish is the

focal point, the origin of all this evil! And Lachish dragged along a number of towns in the area, including Micah's hometown, Moresheth. Lachish' problem was that he put his trust in his own military capabilities, and that he made a motion of no confidence in God.

As believers today, we need to realize very well what our own abilities are. We must use it to the glory of God. However, we must remember clearly that it is God who gives us the abilities. If we

do not do this, we become a god for ourselves. Even the most powerful man on earth must remember at all times that it is God who gives him the power, and that he is totally dependent on God. Put your dependance completely in God's hands.

Lachish' sentence is damning: They will be taken into exile! The carpet is going to be totally ripped out from under them. The sentence came into effect when Samaria fell in 722 BC and so did Jerusalem in 586 BC. The court

adjourned.

Prayer:

Lord God Almighty, I just realized again this morning how insignificant I am, and that I am totally dependent on You.

Businessmen get their Turn

Micah 2: 1-5

Audio

The doors of the swanky office swing open and a man walks in. The receptionist immediately sees from his face and whole attitude that this man is very upset. Her heart was pounding in her throat! "Here comes trouble, trouble with a capital letter **T**!"

"I want to speak to the owner of this business immediately please! I am Rev. Micah of Moresheth. "

"I'm sorry Reverend, Mr Big Boss is not available right now." She just knows that her boss is knee-deep in trouble over his rogish business practices, and she's trying to protect him.

"Thank you very much," said Rev. Micah politely, and before the poor stuttering lady can stop him, he summarily walks into Mr. Big Boss's office and closes the door behind him. She starts to gather her things, because she already knows that she will definitely be without a job after this!

Micah looks the businessmen and women straight in the eye this morning. No, it's not because he's upset that he's doing it - God commanded him to stand there. The way they do business comes under the magnifying glass, and what he sees there certainly does not look kosher. And then Micah shares the news, indeed not good news at all, because he immediately drops the bomb with "Misery!" This word has more substance than we suspect, because it is a word that was used at a funeral to express the

people's sadness and misery about the person who died. In today's terms, it would be like having to read your own obituary in the newspaper.

Now we must understand very clearly, that no one is without sin, and that everyone stumbles at one time or another, often many times in one day. But that's not what this is about. When Micah addresses the businessmen it is about a deliberate, planned, well-thought-out conspiracy. Their plans are worked out, devised

and planned with great care. Afterwards, it is discussed at night with business partners. But that is not where it ends, these obscure plans are then translated into action and executed.

It all comes down to greed, because the money-hungry businessmen who already have plenty of money, want more and more. And it does not matter who suffers from it, and how much harm is done to the other person. The problem is that the victims of such dishonest business

transactions not only lose their money or property but also their human dignity. I have often seen how such a victim would sit in sackcloth and ashes. They are too scared to look other people in the eye. There is a stigma attached to them. Their friends avoid them or simply write them off altogether. And the awkward questions being asked, as if it's their own fault now that this thing has happened. It's humiliating, to say the least!

The problem with obscure

business operations is that it does not only affect the victims. Sin against other people is also sin against God at the same time. Businessmen who keep busy by robbing other innocent people (there is no other word for it!) will eventually discover that they are turning big profits into huge losses. My dear mother-in-law always said that the wheel turns slowly, but surely! What you have sown will come back to haunt you one day! And Micah emphasizes this fact, because just as they have wrongfully seized others'

money and property, they will also lose their own money, property and land, and people will sing mockingly about them. To God, dishonest business is totally unacceptable!

However, the problem can be much worse too, because if you have strayed so far from God that you are deliberately cheating other people and harming them, then you may have strayed so far already that you may lose your faith. That your trust is no longer in Jesus, but in your own (rogue)

power and cleverness. And when that happens, you might have forfeited your chance to inherit eternal life.

My dear friend, if that is where you are today, I plead with you to settle your matter with the Lord. Go make amends where you have failed and ask God for forgiveness. But most important of all, is to put your trust in Jesus alone again. Zacchaeus, the publican, went to make amends where he had sinned, and repaid the people he had robbed double

(Luke 19). And then he followed Jesus.

Prayer:

Lord, please forgive me where I have harmed someone with cunning business practices. Help me fix where I messed up.

Rev. Micah's Cross

Micah 2: 6-11

Audio

Rev. Micah walks into the pastor's study, where he is preparing his sermon for the weekend. The man is so hard at work and so deep in thought, that he does not even see Micah. With a smile, Micah peeks over the pastor's shoulder to see what his sermon is about. Then his smile froze: all he saw there was flattery. The most beautiful things are said, but absolutely no mention is made of

man's own responsibility. He totally ignores all the corruption and murder and manslaughter and bad things going on in the church. All he does in this sermon is to swing the honey brush generously and to soft-soap everyone.

Micah is very upset. He storms out of the study. "This man is not worthy of being called a pastor!" It boils and bubbles inside him. The more he thinks about it, the more he comes to the realization that this pastor is just out to tell the

people what they want to hear. And what's more: this is not the only pastor who does it, there are still others he knows about!

Rev. Micah sits down in front of his computer, and then he writes an email that he plans to send to all the pastors with this attitude. "Be straight with the people!" he writes, "Tell them where their responsibilities lie! The congregations have become corrupt, and you as pastors need to address this issue directly. Do not mince words, tell the

businessmen who do sly transactions and exploit other people that they should stop. Do not try to soothe their conscience by saying nothing about it. Talk about it! ”

Rev. Micah now gets worked up nicely: “You keep telling people all kinds of reassuring things, like that there will never be any misery over them. That they can only deal with their sinful practices! Why then would God be angry about it now? God forgives all your sins. God is love,

remember! He always does only good to His people. He is not at all as serious about sin as that Micah minister wants to make it! Today I want to tell you, dear pastor, you are leading the congregation astray! ”

And then he presses the "SEND" button, and the email flies. But oh woe! Barely had his e-mail been sent, or the letters flow in from numerous highly-upset pastors. Rev. Micah stomped very hard on their corns, and it hurt. "How dare you accuse us!" he is yelled at. "Is

it not right, then, for us to preach about grace and love?"

Rev. Micah is hurting, but it is not his personal hurt. This is the hurt he is experiencing from the people who are victims. "Yes, of course it is right to preach about love and grace! But if there is injustice, you do not dare to keep quiet about it either! God's love and grace bring a certain responsibility to believers, and people need to know what that responsibility entails. It does not help to soothe their consciences!"

When Rev. Micah climbs onto the pulpit that Sunday, he tells the truth. He mentions the congregation's problem by name. He sees some very pious faces suddenly tighten and look at the floor. He makes it very clear that it is often innocent or defenceless people who are hit the hardest by the heartless actions of some. These are widows who have no income and live only on grace, whose homes are taken away from them. These are vulnerable women who are being robbed of the little comfort they still have.

And these are innocent children who end up on the streets. The Lord has given them those houses and comfort and abode, but now it is heartless businessmen who have become greedy who are taking them away from them.

"And the problem is," Rev. Micah hits the last nail in the coffin, "that the guilty are sitting here in the pews this morning. Yes, you know who you are!"

After the service, Rev. Micah returned home. He noticed how

attendance at his worship services had shrunk. This is disturbing. He is no longer the popular preacher of old. But he does not dare to remain silent. And then there is another disturbing thing that has reached his ears. In the corridors there are whispers that they are going to replace him. Some church members want him out of here with all their might. They have another pastor in mind, one who apparently can preach very nicely. They say the man never ever talks about sin, he only talks

about love and grace. On top of that, he is very eloquent. You apparently feel so good after you have listened to one of his sermons.

"Lord, what must I do?" Rev. Micah extends his sigh to the Lord, "Please show me what I must do."

Prayer:

Lord, please help me to carry Your Word out purely without taking the power out of it.

Judges

Micah 2: 12-3: 4

Audio

A bunch of sheep walk around on the open field, bleating aimlessly. Purposeless, shepherdless they walk and wander. The field is full of danger, foxes, caracals and all kinds of vermin. They do not know where to go. They are lost. And then a shepherd comes and starts gathering them. He chases the small groups all in a herd until a large herd of sheep gathers on their way to the safety of the

kraal, away from the deadly claws of all the predators.

Sheep that wander without a shepherd are like an accident looking for a place to happen. They are defenceless animals and many dangers await them. Humans are, in a sense, very much like sheep. Maybe this is not always a flattering thing to say! But Jesus, for example, in a good sense compared people to sheep. He saw Himself as the Shepherd, and the believers His sheep. This is a very beautiful

image that depicts Jesus' care for His children.

Micah also uses this image. In the previous passages we have seen how the Lord judges, but here we see that God also lovingly gathers the portion of the people who have remained faithful as a shepherd brings his sheep, and brings them to safety. God's mercy, His grace and love for those who believe in Him are far greater than His judgment.

But then in the next chapter, Micah talks about the judges

again, and then he's very upset.

A country's legal system determines the civilization of the country. The pictures painted about the then Wild West were, to say the least, completely stripped of all right. If the people thought a man was guilty, he was summarily hanged or shot dead, often without a trial. It did not go much better in Barberton and Pilgrims Rest during the great gold rush. No one was sure of his life, and scams, murder and manslaughter were the norm of life.

Today, South Africa actually has a very good legal system, and in general the integrity of the judges is unwavering. But in Micah's time it was a completely different matter. As it is still totally corrupt in many parts of the world today.

In Israel there were very clear guidelines according to which a judge had to act. Exodus 18 and Deuteronomy 1 lay down the stipulations according to which a judge had to work. Micah, however, paints a disturbing picture where the judges do the

exact opposite when determining the precepts laid down in the Holy Scriptures. They do not care about God's stipulations! Instead of loving the good, they hate it. And instead of hating the wrong things, they just love it.

It was so bad that Micah compared the judges to butchers, in a bad way. These judges deal with the people who need their help as butchers do with an animal's carcass. In court, the innocent are literally slaughtered and their skins peeled off

(figuratively speaking).

However, this does not mean that we should now, together with Micah, point the finger at the bad judges. At the same time, Micah speaks to ordinary people in their daily lives. Each of us is at some point a judge who has to make a decision. It can be in our daily lives, in the office, at home or in the community. There are situations when we have to make a decision towards our spouse, children or parents. At work, it could be my employees or maybe

my employer or colleagues. Or it could be customers.

Every such decision I make, I must be able to measure against the Word of God. Is this what I decide according to the norms of love that Jesus laid down? As an employer, for example, I do not like a specific person very much, because he irritates me, and now I am looking for any possible opportunity to get rid of him "legally". A mistake I would normally overlook is thrown at this person's feet, and he is fired,

suspended, chased away.

We saw at the beginning how the Shepherd lovingly gathers us as lost sheep. We see the great grace that God shows us, and how He forgives us time and time again, despite all our shortcomings, and often even wilful sins.

But now He also asks the same of us. From the abundance of love that He pours out on us, He asks that we also give back a little to our fellow-man. We pray "And forgive us our trespasses," but

then we forget that part of the prayer goes: "as we forgive those who trespass against us." As the Great Judge judges us, He also wants us to judge others. Be fair. Be loving. But above all, be forgiving.

Prayer:

Lord, I am guilty before You when I think of how many times I have wronged my fellow-man.

About the Prophets

Micah 3: 5-8

Audio

At that time, in Micah's time, the prophets were the link between God and the people. There were no Bibles you could read, for the few writings then available were handwritten on parchment or papyrus, with homemade ink and goose feather pens. There was not even paper as we know it today. Only the scribes and prophets had insight into the Word of God, and writings on this

were extremely limited. It was only during the exile that most of the oral traditions were put in writing. It was therefore the task of the prophets to make the will of God known to the people. It was they who had to preach the Word.

So there were two methods of dealing with the Word: A man learned Scriptures from a rabbi from his head, and then passed them on orally to his children. And then there were the prophets who had to teach the people and transmit the Word. So you could

not quickly look in your Bible or preach someone the truth.

Unfortunately, Micah was one of the very few prophets left who did not become corrupt. When Rev. So Micah, walking in the day of worship, where the prophets were teaching the people, began to preach to the prophets; And what he preaches to them is certainly not flattering. He says that their sermons are determined by the food that goes into their mouths. If such a prophet is fed with caviar, shrimp and lobster, then

he preaches very beautiful sermons, just as the people like to hear. But if he just gets dry porridge or maybe has to go hungry, then he is properly waging war against his congregation.

In other words, it is not primarily for them to preach the Word of God in spite of everything, but it is about money. If they receive generous compensation, they are willing to deliver a “sermon on demand,” one that everyone likes and that makes everyone feel

good. If the money is not there in abundance, then the congregation is bad-mouthed. Years later, Paul faced the same problem in Corinth, where there were pastors who preached only for the money.

And today? It still happens today! We often hear of pastors getting rich from their preaching. And then in most cases it is only about nice words, they preach the things that the congregation wants to hear and not what the Word of God says.

We have also seen such pastors fall, not financially, but spiritually. Where court cases have been brought against them and all sorts of ugly things are happening.

Micah then also says that this kind of "sermons on demand" will come to an end. These prophets will realize that they have absolutely nothing more to say. There will simply be no more revelations from God coming to them.

Do you have any idea how "author block" feels? If you

haven't written anything yet, it's just a vague notion. For the serious writer, this is the biggest nightmare in his life. His life depends on his writing. Writers' block is when the day goes to sit down to write, and in his head there is only this large empty cavity in which there are no thoughts. It can sometimes last for days and weeks and even months. He has to write a new story, but he does not have a story to write. It drives him to rage.

And this is certainly how these prophets must have felt in Micah's time, because they had to preach about something in order to get money, but God gives them absolutely nothing to preach about.

Micah, on the other hand, has something they do not have: the Spirit of the Lord! The Holy Spirit is in him and works through him because he is willing to do what God asks of him. Maybe he doesn't get the money the other prophets get, and maybe the

congregation doesn't really like listening to him because he says things they don't want to hear. But one thing is certain: the Lord is in constant conversation with Micah, and he never lacks words. It constantly bubbles in him because God speaks to him and God shows him where Israel's sin lies.

Micah has a task on his shoulders, and he does it without hesitation. He is not afraid to fearlessly, baldly tell the people and even the other prophets the

truth. Thank goodness: Micah was not the only one. There were other prophets who did not hesitate to speak the truth, such as Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They were also willing to stand up for the truth.

The question is, are you and I willing to stand up for the truth unconditionally? Are we willing to defend God, no matter what the circumstances? Or are we just going to go with the flow just to keep the peace and make our own situation comfortable?

Rather say what people like?

Prayer:

Lord, please give me the courage and strength not to remain silent for the truth.

Materialism - the Monster.

Micah 3: 9-12

Audio

Micah concludes his ominous prophecies in the last four verses of chapter 3 with a summary of what he has already said. But if you read these verses, you will find that there is something much deeper lurking beneath this mantle of injustice, namely the monster of materialism! Maybe I should just start by talking about some very dear people who have crossed our path over the past

few years. After we were plunged into a financial crisis, Willem and Linda gave us free accommodation for a full year. They did not want to accept a penny for our stay in their house. After them it was Danie and Adele who did exactly the same thing, and when that place was no longer available, it was Ockie and Gill who came forward again. For these people, it is about living out love as Jesus presented it to us.

But in Micah's community, it was something completely different.

Everything has its price! The judges would deliver judgments only to benefit certain people, the prophets would deliver prophecies only to soothe the minds of the people, and the priests would curry favour and flatter the congregation with beautiful Religious counsel. And behind all these actions sits the one single motive: materialism.

The judges will deliver a verdict only if the person pays. And if he pays generously, the judge will benefit his case, even if he is

guilty, and he will then unfairly condemn the other party, even if he is innocent!

The priests give beautiful, flattering advice on all kinds of religious matters, but only if their payment is worthwhile. Even the prophets are willing to prophesy as you would like to hear his prophecy, but the condition was once again that there would be enough money involved.

Materialism is a disease. However, this is not an ailment that was only tied to Micah's time.

This disease has taken on epidemic proportions over the centuries and on several occasions completely destroyed nations. However, it is also not limited to the leaders, prophets and judges. This is something that can overwhelm entire communities. The leaders are only the tip of the iceberg protruding above the sea. Deep down the other ninety percent is a murky vortex that bubbles and boils. So when Micah speaks to the leaders of the people, he is actually talking to the whole

nation.

The one big problem of materialism is that absolutely everything is measured in monetary value. In other words, it is not only the material things but also the things in life that actually have no monetary value. We can think of things like good justice, at all levels, genuine, pure Religion, high moral values and tragically enough, even mercy and love. Once it has dropped to this level, then it is to cry and mourn about. It is so tragic that materialism and

greed for money are often embellished in a fragrant religious sauce! Micah weeps in verse 11: *They say, "The Lord is with us, and evil will not overtake us."* Nothing can go wrong as long as they practice materialism in the Name of God. But everything has already gone wrong! How can you expect the Lord to be with you as long as you are deliberately exploiting other people? How can you claim His blessing as long as you unjustly judge someone else? While harming people for the sake of

money? And how can you act unlovingly and often cruelly towards your fellow-man, while at the same time claiming to have a wonderful, loving relationship with God?

These things simply do not make sense! You cannot serve God and Mammon equally! God's holiness, love, grace, and all-encompassing closeness simply cannot be tainted with greed, materialism, injustice, and lovelessness. It does not make sense!

Micah concludes his speech with a crushing statement about the pride of the people: Jerusalem. "*Jerusalem will become a ruin,*" foretells Micah. The beautiful city is going to be plundered, and with it the jewel of the city, the heartbeat of the people: the breathtaking, holy temple. "*The Temple Mount will become a hill full of bushes.*" warns Micah. How tragic. And for Micah the blame for this lies at the door of the people and their leaders. They are responsible for this. This judgment they brought upon

themselves.

Prayer:

Lord, please keep me from greed and materialism. Fill my heart with love and mercy.

Peace is coming!

Micah 4: 1-5

Audio

Passages in the Bible are often shrouded in mystery - things we simply cannot understand or explain. Micah 4:1-5 is one of those passages - not because what is written is incomprehensible, but because there is a virtually identical passage in Isaiah 2: 1-5. It's practically a word-for-word repetition. Did Isaiah copy this passage from Micah? Or did

Micah copy his words from Isaiah? Possibly both of these prophets took this passage from another unknown book or source. No one knows. There is, of course, another possibility, one that sounds totally impossible to man, and that is that both of these writers wrote exactly the same words at the insistence of the Holy Spirit. It sounds impossible! The chance that two writers could write exactly the same is zero. Yet everything is possible with God. How do you think these two identical writings

came to be?

But what is this passage about? Peace! "There will come a time ..." Micah writes, and then he describes a seemingly impossible situation where there is complete peace.

How people do not yearn for true peace! In the homeland of Simon of Sirene, Libya, Moamar Ghadaffi led a reign of terror for many years. The end result was that a bloody civil war broke out in an attempt to bring about peace. In the process of achieving

peace, the world's forces banded together and tried to shoot down peace with bombs and rockets. This is not an isolated case. Wars all over the world rage and people long for peace and just to be able to sit under a tree again without fear of being shot dead any moment.

South Africa is a country where peace reigns, but even here there are constantly bloody strikes and protests. Every day people are killed, raped and violently robbed. Even innocent children are shot

dead in cold blood in gang violence! Those who can afford it live behind bars and with sophisticated security systems. You can hardly go anywhere and just relax with a worry-free picnic, because everywhere it is dangerous!

But Micah says, "Peace is coming!" What a wonderful prospect! And this is not just a short-lived peace, it is a lasting peace! You probably still remember how political leaders of various countries at the time tried

to advocate for peace in Zimbabwe, when that country was in its worst need. It was fruitless!

The peace of which Micah speaks, however, is not advocated or brought about by political leaders, but by God. And therefore it is a peace that is perfect. True peace can only happen where people acknowledge God as God. When He works this peace, people will flock to the temple of God again. Before lock time, I often

wondered on Sundays where all the people were? Do they ever need to attend a worship service? Is this perhaps the reason why we are so plagued by unrest in our country? But during the peace that Micah sees, people flock in hordes to worship God together.

What happens when this peace comes? Weapons become totally redundant, and they are transformed into agricultural implements. The Ministry of Defence becomes completely redundant because neighboring

nations no longer live in enmity with each other. The image is painted of someone sitting quietly under his vineyard and relaxing without any worries. Someone else is sitting back against the trunk of a fig tree. There is no danger that he will be attacked or robbed from behind.

When we read these idyllic images, we want to laugh! Does Micah perhaps not live in Utopia? Our lives today are so exactly the opposite, and then it feels like it's only getting worse every day.

Violence is just increasing every day. What should I do as a believer? Surely God cannot possibly be present in this world where so many things go wrong? Can a believer ever do anything about it?

The answer is that as a believer I will live positively and not stare blindly at all the violence and bad things. If every believer will only live the love that Jesus described for us, then there is already a bright light of peace burning. I can hint at something of God's peace

by living as God asks of me. In this way, God's perfect peace will already be visible in the world. Yes, indeed, we see everywhere this wonderful peace looming in believers who fully live out and radiate Jesus' love. Believers are future-orientated people - people who live from the future. God has given us that indescribable hope of things to come, and from that hope we can already live and organize our lives today.

The hope God gives us from the Word is enough to carry us

through the greatest hardship and discontent, for that hope tells us of the ultimate indescribable life at the feet of Jesus. And that hope is not just something vague, but a reality.

Prayer:

Lord, I look forward to peace - the perfect peace that awaits me!

It Will Get Better

Micah 4: 6-14

Audio

The strict restrictions of last year have financially cracked many people. Some left without work, others' businesses crumbled. Maybe you're one of them.

Yes, I know how it feels! In 2010, I saw how my world was tumbling around me when our business started to sink. I pleaded with the Lord to save me from this disaster, but it did not happen. Finally there was one last piece of

hope: my house. If it could only be sold at a reasonable price, then we were saved. But the market was down! In the end, the last option was an auction. The proceeds did not even nearly cover the debt. I was sitting in sackcloth and ashes - everything I had was gone, and there was also a mountain of debt to be paid.

But I do not lose hope. Desperately, I cling to the one piece of hope that remains, the Lord. When everything is at its

darkest, and we no longer have a roof over our heads, He miraculously provides. When there is no crumb of food left in the house, He provides from a totally unexpected source. When my heart is broken, the Lord comes and strengthens me. When I look up to Him in total dependence, He gives me courage. When I feel alone in the world, fellow believers overwhelm me with love, encouragement, assistance, and comfort. Suddenly I realize how many people there really are who care!

In verse 6 Micah tells how the Lord told him that He would gather the lame and those scattered in captivity and those affected by disasters. According to the law of Leviticus 21, the lame could not serve as priests. But now it is precisely the lame who are singled out to start anew with the Lord. He will make a nation again of the remnant of what was once a nation. He will raise up the sick to become a nation. And then God will rule over them. Is this not the most wonderful consolation!

Often it is precisely in suffering and pain that the blessing of the Lord comes through most clearly. Micah uses the example of a woman in labour. Think carefully about what happens: for nine months the mother carries the growing baby around in her. There are often all sorts of complications, and as time goes on it gets worse and the discomfort gets bigger. I have heard so often that a pregnant mom says that she just cannot take it anymore - that it is just starting to become one too much.

But the worst is yet to come! First the terrible birth pains that get more intense every minute. And then when she starts giving birth and the pain becomes totally unbearable - for many moms it feels like the end of the world.

And suddenly everything is over, and the joy that knows no bounds - to be able to hold that little bundle in your arms. And the little miracle fills your whole being with peace and joy and wonder and gratitude. Then you know that all those months of discomfort and

the terrible pain were all worth it through and through. Then you also realize that without that pain and sorrow, you would never have been able to experience this joy.

The pain of the disaster that befell me was a necessity to purify me and teach me about total dependence on God. The torment is sometimes still there, because I still have a long way to go to learn total confidence. But I accept it with joy, because I realize very well that the “Potter” is not

finished with this rough piece of clay at all. On top of that, the clay does not always want to cooperate! But despite that, I experience intense joy. I see the wonderful hand of God through it all, and I experience His indescribable grace, love, humility, and compassion far more than ever before.

But then I also fully realize that this is just the beginning. The curtain is only pulled open on a small slit so that I can experience something of heaven here. Micah

looks forward to the one day, the day Jesus will come again on the clouds, and we can enter that indescribably beautiful, peaceful, loving home of God, heaven. Then all the pain and sorrows will be forgotten forever! The hardships are therefore all part of our preparation process.

But what about all the injustice that is still going on? What about the crime and lovelessness of the world? You and I do not have to break our heads over that! Not only will the wicked destroy one

another, but the judgment of God will strike them. You and I do not have to judge, the Judge of all Judges - to Him comes the judgment.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you that I can experience suffering, because I know that You shape me in it to Your glory.

The New King

Micah 5: 1-5

Audio

The intrigues of the royal houses fascinate the whole world. You probably still remember the fuss when Prince Albert married our beautiful Charlene at the time. We marvelled at the royal pomp and splendour. And of course all the scandals that were whispered about in the corridors

Of course, the royal house of Britain is also constantly in the news, and from time to time

Grandma Elizabeth has to put out fires for her children and grandchildren's scandals. Harry and Meghan are constantly on the front pages of newspapers. Indeed, things are going relatively well in the royal house now, if you consider the scandal of some of Britain's kings. Take for instance Henry the 8th, and how he got rid of his wives one after the other, every time his hormones bothered him and new talent passed by.

In Biblical times it got even worse,

much worse! Thick books have been written about the kings of Israel. And the few "good" kings you can count on the fingers of one hand. Even the good kings had skeletons in their closet. Like David, the beloved king who wrote songs that are still sung thousands of years later. He was a man who loved the Lord intensely. But his skeletons were disgusting. He committed adultery. He had the husband of the woman who so fascinated him, killed. He had no control over his children. Not even

mentioning men like Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. Time and time again we read in the chronicles of the kings: "The king did that which was evil in the sight of God." Israel's kings were all in all a huge disappointment to the people. Psalm 72 describes the ideal king, but nothing came of this.

And now Micah comes with an announcement that blows over you like a fresh breeze, like deliciously sweet, ice-cold water in the heat of the arid desert. He

tells of this King who is not corrupt like everyone else. Everyone who reads Micah will sit up and read it again. "Is it ever possible ?!" This new King of whom Micah writes will certainly not disappoint. He meets all the requirements that God sets for a king. And on top of that, he lies in the line of the beloved King David. But His kingdom's roots lie actually much, much further back than David - it extends "into the grey past" (Micah 5: 1).

Yet this King comes from a very

small and insignificant town, Bethlehem Ephrathah. If you come from there, it means that you have a very humble background. David came from there as well! He was the youngest of Jesse's sons, and the last one to be considered for possible kingship. He was a mere shepherd, a child of the veldt who had to spend many nights under the stars and sleep on the hard ground. Yet he was the one who united Israel and built it into a great and mighty nation.

But this is how the Lord works. He does things in the most unlikely and unexpected way. Small and insignificant people become big and important in the hands of the Master Potter.

But David was not the one Micah wrote about. However, the King of all kings was born in the same small town, Bethlehem and in a humble stable, of all places! His humble life was relatively short-lived, a meagre 33 years, and then He was crucified - nailed to a cursed cross. His life was marked

by peace and love and humility. He always sought the best for the people who followed Him. He healed their diseases, gave them food and taught them.

But then came the crucifixion and His ascension. And now we wait in great anticipation for the day when He returns. Micah says that it will only be a short time, as long as it takes a woman to give birth to a child. How long is that short while? No one knows, not even the angels. Nor can we take it literally, that it would take nine

months. It is "prophetic perspective" which simply means that day will be unexpected, just as a normal birth is unexpected. All the signs are there that it should happen soon, but it still remains a big surprise. Those who work out that the Second Coming will take place on a certain day are deceiving people. The signs are already very clear there that Jesus' return can take place at any moment. It could even be today or tomorrow, but it could also take years. The great thing is that we must be ready, as

the husband of the pregnant woman must be ready for the moment when the birth pains begin.

Oh, what a wonderful prospect it is! With Jesus' return absolutely everything will change. Are you also looking forward to it? And are you ready to meet Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord, I look forward with great anticipation to the wonderful day of Your return.

Dew in the Arid Desert

Micah 5:6-14

Audio

In the dry, arid landscape of Palestine, everything and everyone longs for a drop of water, just a little refreshment. However, when the bloody sun disappears behind the horizon, a heavy dew descends over the arid earth which leaves plant and animal virtually soaking wet, and deliciously refreshed in the early morning. Thirsty animals gratefully lick the dew off the

blades of grass and withered plants suck in the moisture to get new life.

On the arid Skeleton Coast of Southern Africa lies the oldest desert in the world, arid, dry, wasted. But when the fog bank adds it's soft down blankets over the landscape in the morning, these lifeless sand dunes suddenly come to life. Insects, geckos and gemsbok drink the dew that condenses on the rare blades of grass - life-giving, promising dew in a world where

death lies in waiting.

Micah describes "those of Jacob who remain" as dew in an arid world, dew that comes from the Lord. They will be among many people. But not only will they be like dew but also like life-giving soft rains that penetrate deep into the arid earth and soak the roots of the plants with new life.

Believers are also part of "those of Jacob who remain" and therefore a great responsibility rests on us to be like dew and soft rain in the world where we

live and work. Believers are simply not allowed to sit "unemployed", waiting for the coming of the new King we read about in the previous passage. We live in a world "among many peoples". Who are these peoples? All who are unbelievers. There are those who, of course, openly worship idols, such as the Hindus. But most of the people we deal with associate themselves with the banner of the Christian faith, but they practice a dead religion. They believe in God's existence (the devil

believes it too!) And they even believe that God is the Creator. But they have never come to Jesus. Then that religion is arid and even dead like the Skeleton Coast.

This is exactly where the believers' task lies, to be like promising dew or rain for such people. We must be a blessing to the environment, an asset. Of course, this is not something you can do on your own. Just as the fog of the Skeleton Coast is a gift given by God, so we also receive

the gift and power of God to be a refreshment to man. He gives us these tools in our hands. But the responsibility then lies with us to use it.

When are you such a relief to the people around you? When everything in you is like a fresh breeze, like dew. Simply living out and radiating love is already such a relief. I begin by coming to the deep realization of God's great love for me. It should evoke in me an overwhelming peace and joy of life, something that can be

seen on my face and my whole attitude. It simply does not suit a believer to be grumpy and unfriendly, even when things are going badly for you. Remember: suffering is just a process of purification to make us stronger, and something for which we should be grateful.

My life of joy, love and peace must be a pleasant fragrance for others, so that they will be hungry to want that life too. It then opens doors to transmit the gospel to them.

But there is also a second aspect that Micah mentions - and that is that believers will be like lions. The image that a lion radiates is one of strength and invincibility. As a believer, you do not just say "yes and amen" to everything, but you gain the strength to stand up and fight for the expansion of God's Kingdom. Of course, the Kingdom has enemies and adversaries, and this means that believers must be able to stand strong in difficult circumstances. However, being dew or a lion

means that I must first put my hand in my own bosom and correct what is wrong in my life. But I must also learn that I cannot put my trust in worldly things, but only in God. Micah speaks of "horses and chariots and strongholds" - things that give you a false sense of security. Today we may be talking about a healthy bank balance, a good job or a position on the church council. But it could also be that you see your strength in your good religious practice - I go to church every Sunday, give my

tithe, help the poor. You bulge your spiritual muscles.

But these are all fake securities. Your true security comes from God alone - a total dependence on God. It is He alone who can give me the strength to rise in His Kingdom. And it is He alone who can make me refreshing and promising dew in the arid world. We must never forget that.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for giving me all the equipment to be of service in Your Kingdom. Help me to be

able to use that equipment with power, but at the same time also in humility and full dependence on You.

God's Great Grace

Micah 6: 1-8

Audio

We have now come to the second major part of Micah. The first part started with a court case, and now the second part starts again with a court case. In a court case, accusations are often thrown back and forth and dirty laundry is washed. Lovelessness and hatred are often an integral part of such an occasion. However, this one is very different, because the Lord is the Righteous and

Loving Judge, we can expect a just court case.

Micah begins by calling the witnesses: the mountains and hills. They have been there all these centuries, and they have seen how the people arrived there and what they have done through the ages. And they saw what the Lord had done for the people. They could therefore vouch for the truth of the testimony that the Prosecutor will lead against the people.

The charge of the Lord against

the people begins in a surprising way. He does not present a charge sheet and start with damning evidence, as we would expect. He begins by asking if the Lord may not have done something wrong in the relationship between Him and His people. A further surprise is that He does not address the people as "the accused", but as "My people". He still has not broken the covenant between Him and His people, despite their apostasy. He still does not stop loving His people deeply, even

though they have strayed so far. “My people, what have I done to you and how have I tired you out? Answer Me!” asks the Lord.

But the people have absolutely nothing to say to this.

Then the Lord goes on and He quotes from history, because it is after all the memory of the people. Of course, they will still remember how the Lord miraculously saved them from Egypt, where they were slaves of the Pharaoh, and where they were driven to their utmost. The

Lord's tremendous act of salvation there was, to say the least, breathtaking, astonishing! The logistical wonder of God's provision of food and water to millions of Israelites on their journey through the desert is almost impossible in today's terms. It would take years of careful planning to do what was completed within a few weeks. The passage through the Reed Sea still makes the great military leaders shake their heads in disbelief today.

Not only did the Lord provide here, He also gave the right leaders at the right time, Moses, Aaron, Joshua. And then He even uses gentiles like Balaam. When Balak hired Balaam to curse the Israelites, Balaam blessed them when the Lord addressed him. The Lord quotes the places Shittem and Gilgal, for what Israelite will not remember these names? Shittem was the last place the Israelites were before they triumphantly crossed the Jordan to occupy the Promised Land. And Gilgal was the first

place they encountered in this new land that the Lord had given them.

We are also constantly reminded of our own past, of the miraculous way the Lord led and preserved our people. The miracles from our own history are legendary. But it's not just our nation's history - think back to your own life, how the Lord lovingly provided, often at times when we deserved it the least. I can write books on the Lord's provision in my life! The past few years alone have stood

out for me with miracle upon miracle, and love and grace in abundance. Even through physically difficult times, I could experience how He carried me, and still carries me. But the greatest grace yet was the day when He saved me from the bondage of the devil, that day when Jesus came into my life. That was any day just as great as the deliverance from Egypt!

Finally the people get a chance to answer (verse 6). They realize all too well how wrong they have

acted against the Lord, and then they want to try to rectify the matter. All kinds of sacrifices are considered, even in large numbers like thousands of rams and thousands of sacrifices of oil. They even consider going so far as to sacrifice their own children, their firstborn to God!

However, this is not what the Lord wants. He asks that their hearts be changed. As your heart changes, so does your lifestyle. What you do is proof of what you carry in your heart. Jesus later

summed it up, that it means to love your fellow-man. Much has already been written on this subject, of what exactly it means to live out love. Paul clearly spells this out in 1 Cor. 13. But it also means living our love for God. Before you can begin to do that, there must first be a living relationship with Him. And that is exactly what Jesus is asking of you and me today, a living relationship with Him.

Prayer:

Lord, today I realize once again

how much You have done for me,
and how infinitely You love me.
Please help me to live a living
relationship of love with You.

Corruption

Micah 6: 9-16

Audio

When you turn on the news, you just hear "Corruption!" And when you open the newspaper, you just read "Corruption!" It has become a common word in our society. In parliament, it is strongly condemned, and newspapers write poisonous reports about it. In America, Donald Trump shouts, "Corruption!" with the election results. And even in the highest council of our country, parliament,

corruption is brewing like a stinking rotten tank. And because it has polluted parliament, it seeps through to all levels of society. Corruption is in the order of the day in most big companies - every now and then the influential businessman is in the news about corruption. Giant companies are fined millions of rands for so-called price fixing - something that hits the poor man where it hurts the most, such as the price of bread!

Micah speaks loud and clear

about this matter, and he mentions it by name. Corruption is nothing but blatant robbery! He says that the shopkeeper deliberately changed his measuring line, so that when he measures out a metre of material, you actually only get 90cm. Then it's theft! The same is done with the measuring cup, so you only get 900ml of milk if you pay for a full liter. And your "kilogram" of wheat actually weighs a lot less.

Corruption today is often about entering into a government

contract at a much higher price than it is supposed to be, because you got bribes. The taxpayer is the one who suffers from it.

But we are very quick to point the finger at the government officials, and then we forget the corruption in our own lives. Doing something to someone else, even on a small scale, is still corruption. Cheating someone out of a few cents is also corruption. Indeed, Micah speaks to the people, but he also speaks to you and to me.

The problem is that believers often want to separate the church from the work. Sunday we go to church and then we are angels, we say the most beautiful things and we philosophize about the truth and love and your attitude towards your neighbour. But it's from Sunday. Come Monday, then Sunday will be completely forgotten because it is now over. And then again, it is just the old me thinking of myself, not caring how I cheat on someone else to make my profit. Not caring how I exploit my fellow-man so I can

live comfortably.

Indeed, the same God we worship on Sunday is also God where we draw up business contracts or where trade transactions are concluded. And the same God is also present where we pay workers' salaries. And of course, He is also present where we set profit margins. Or where I fill out my tax return.

But corruption comes to an end at some point, and usually it is not a pleasant end. You will be caught out at some point, and so

corruption avenges itself. A country run by a corrupt government usually comes out impoverished on the other side. It's economy is being destroyed. Just look at what happened to Zimbabwe. And once that happens, that country becomes an easy prey for it's enemies, because then it simply no longer has the infrastructure to defend itself. He could lose his political independence and become an international disgrace.

Is there an answer to this kind of

situation? You and I as simple believers may not have the power to counter large-scale corruption, but we can at least start with ourselves. The big secret is: Live out love. Jesus summed up that we must love God and also our neighbour. Paul described this concept broadly, especially in 1 Cor. 13, where he tells in clear words what true love means. The Ten Commandments describe your love for your neighbour clearly and distinctly.

When we apply these biblical

principles in our lives, then there is simply no room for corruption. And that in no way means living "legally" but simply applying the basic principles of love. Not a negative: "You shall not steal" but a positive: respect your neighbour's property. Failure to do so will damage your neighbour, and it is very definitely loveless. Be honest in business transactions, otherwise it may cause great harm to your fellow human beings, and then you have definitely acted unlovingly.

We must never forget the great, selfless love that Jesus showed us. The least we can do to say thank you for that is to live out our love for our neighbor, in all walks of life - including in the commercial world.

Prayer:

Lord, lead me to live without corruption in all areas of my life, and to live out my love to the fullest.

No Believers Left?

Micah 7: 1-7

Audio

Have you ever felt that you are the only one left who still believes in Jesus? Years ago I worked for a construction company, and there I really felt like I was the only believer. Hardly a weekend went by without a drunken party - wild parties where there was often a stripper involved. And always huge amounts of booze. One of the directors wooed his colleague's wife from him. The

two continued to work together - it was not such a big deal Vulgar jokes were the order of the day. The finance director often left his wife at home and then hung out in strip clubs and joints in Durban until the early hours of the morning. She kept praying for him.

I felt lonely because I could not engage in anything. No one even invited me to their parties because they knew how I felt about it. I was half-mockingly looked at as the wet dish-cloth.

Micah also felt this way, alone and lonely, because there was no one left who could share his passion for God with him. Everywhere he looked around, he saw only the wicked flourishing. "There is no longer a believer in the land!" he moaned desperately in verse 2.

If I look around me today, it is with anguish that I see how church attendance is waning, fewer and fewer people are coming to church. And now with the restrictions, where we broadcast

worship services, fewer and fewer people watch the service on Youtube on Sundays. To give an example: the City Centre congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church was on fire in my young days. There was always something exciting going on. The two young pastors had to hold their own to get to everything in the congregation. Sadly the congregation has shrunk over the past few years so that in the end only 20 members remain. Tragic!

In the meantime, however, a

great miracle took place, and the churches of Durban united together to utilize the old church building. Today, thousands of people are reached weekly with the gospel from this congregation, which is now run by the Durban Metropole Ministry. In tomorrow's devotional we will also see that everything is definitely not lost! God is still in control, even though it feels to you and me as if the whole world has spiritually collapsed!

But back to Micah's problem: He

laments that crime is on the rise - "everyone sets traps to commit murder" (verse 2). Doesn't that sound familiar? Isn't that just how we experience it today? There is simply no more respect for another's life. People, often even school children, are killed for a cellphone or even sandwiches. "They hunt their brethren with nets" (v 2). How many times have people not been led into traps in recent years, and then hijacked? It's disgusting. It is tragic that our society has stepped so low. The community has become like an

orchard where only the bare trees stand without any fruit, says Micah.

Values have totally decreased. Government officials are often the villains in society. How many policemen have not been arrested recently for crime? Even officers with the highest ranks are under suspicion today! Police officers are involved in drug or crime syndicates. They encourage people to do wrong, and that while they are supposed to maintain law and order!

Claiming justice also does not help anymore, because the legal system is often plunged into impotence. It takes many years to settle a court case, and then only a very small percentage of criminals are eventually convicted.

There is no question of justice in society, because transactions are often concluded under the table in very dubious ways. Materialism is the order of the day, it dominates the whole of society. Everyone just thinks of themselves. You can

no longer trust anyone, not even your own friends or close relatives (verse 5). All values such as respect, integrity, honesty, trust and awe have disappeared from society.

How does a believer live in such a sick society? It is certainly not easy. But the consolation is still there: just cling to the Lord desperately. Continue to serve the Lord, despite the circumstances around you. "I will trust in the Lord." says Micah confidently. He knows where his

salvation comes from. You and I can say so much more today, and place all our hope in God. He still remains faithful and just, and He will never put us to shame. Tomorrow concludes the book of Micah with wonderful, positive news!

Prayer:

Lord, everything often seems so dark around me, but I know where my help is coming from. Thank You that I can cling to You, and know that You are still always there for me.

God is Merciful

Micah 7: 8-20

Audio

Have you ever experienced hardship in your life? I do not believe that any of us can answer 'no' to this question. Admittedly, some of our readers have been through a lot in their lives - that's the fate of us all. In the concluding section of Micah's book, he speaks to those who have fallen hard, and who may now be sitting in great darkness. If this is your destiny - there is

hope! You can enter life positively again!

Just listen to what Micah says in verse 8: “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. Though I have fallen, I rise again; even though I sit in the dark, the Lord is a light to me. ”

And then Micah continues: he tells that the people sincerely realized that they had sinned and that they were therefore guilty. Now they can only look up to the Lord, because in the darkness He is the only Light. The people also realized that these terrible things

that had befallen them were merely the result of their own sin. They are willing to bear the punishment for it.

When there is sin in your life, there is really only one way out that makes sense - confess it! Jesus later taught His disciples exactly the same thing: confess your sins and acknowledge that things are not right in your life! You will then find out that God is faithful, and that He forgives you. This people could look forward to the Lord bringing them light again

and lifting them out of their misery again. You and I can look exactly the same to the light that is already shining - God's light, and that He will lift us out of our suffering.

Micah is very excited when he sees the people being restored and the city walls being rebuilt. The nations that looked down on Israel will then flock to Israel. His enemies will be defeated, and Israel will once again stand autonomously, proud to be the people of God.

You and I may also be upset now, just like Job of old, who lost everything in his life. But just look at how God lifted him up again. Indeed, you and I can once again proudly raise our heads and look people in the eye, proud to be children of God and to know that He has forgiven and lifted us up.

Verses 14 to 17 are actually a prayer. “Take care of your people with your staff, the flocks that are your property, living alone in a forest in the middle of a fertile area. Let them feed in Bashan

and Gilead, as in the days of old.
” With this, Micah's prayer is that the Lord will once again be the Shepherd of the people, as in the old days, as David wrote in his beautiful Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd - I shall lack nothing". There is a close bond between a shepherd and his sheep. He lives with them in the field and knows each one personally by name. He knows exactly what each one's goats and skits are, and he talks to them and calms them down when there is a beast in the area.

What a beautiful image, for so is the Lord. He is not somewhere up there in heaven, but He is here with us, His flock, His sheep. He only wants the best for us, and therefore He will lead us to the best pastures. He knows each of us by name - knows us through and through. He cares intensely for us. Yes, often He has to use the cane, the shepherd's staff when we want to break away and follow our own path. It may hurt, but it is necessary for our own salvation.

When we read the first verses of the book of Micah, it may have been with anguish that our hearts ached, for the book begins with a court case. But now Micah (verses 18-20) ends with a glorious song of praise to God. Indeed, He is merciful and He forgives. There is absolutely no one like God - He is unique! He cannot be compared to anyone else. "Who is a God like you? You are a God who forgives guilt! " Micah exclaims. We have said above that we must confess our sins. However, this is not the

guarantee that the sins will be forgiven. The guarantee lies with God alone, for He is the One who is merciful. His love and faithfulness make Him forgive sins. But it is not only forgiven - it is also totally taken away, so that God never thinks about it again. Please compare Isaiah 1:18. You do not have to apologize over and over for a sin you have committed. Once God has forgiven it, it is over, so different from our people who often throw a certain transgression against someone's head time and time

again, even though it has sometimes happened years ago.

That God forgives sins is not just a cheap thing. He was so serious about it that He humbled His humble Son, Jesus, and finally paid the highest price to redeem me and you from our sins. This was the only condition that could be acceptable to God. Today is the final guarantee that our sins are forgiven.

In the Old Testament it is often presented to us that God is a cruel God who punishes. In Micah

we saw the opposite. No matter how low man has fallen, God is still willing to pick him up and forgive him by grace and lift him up again.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for Micah who just made us realize once again how great Your grace and love are for us.