

It's OK to Cry: Lament in the Life of a Christian

Micah 1:1-16

Bethany Assembly of God

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Central Proposition: We should lament the sin that leads to death.

Introduction

As many of you know, in mid-2021, my Mom was diagnosed with an incurable form of cancer called multiple myeloma. In February 2022, my daughter and I were able to go and visit my Mom and Dad. It was pretty clear over the course of that visit that, apart from a miracle from God, my Mom was going to see Jesus soon. Five days later, she was absent from her body and present with the Lord. I have a deep sense of grief, almost of anger over her loss. It feels absurd and stupid. It's difficult to put this sense of loss into words. We're beginning a series of messages through the book of Micah today and I think Micah is characterized by this feeling in particular. We might call it a feeling of lament, but doom and gloom isn't all there is to the Micah. He still hopes in the Lord. Like Micah, we live at a time when it seems like godliness is vanishing and wickedness is increasing and we may feel overwhelmed with the apparent darkness around us. Micah's prophecy can help us understand how God deals with that evil and what we should do in response. He helps us wait for the light of the Lord in the midst of darkness. Let's look into Micah's message, it doesn't begin on a happy note.

1. The Lord is coming to judge. See Micah 1:2-7; Revelation 6:14-17.

The judgment was coming specifically against the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its capital, Samaria, but God calls Judah and all the nations to pay attention. If they wouldn't pay attention to the warning of Israel's judgment, they would suffer the same. Why was God bringing this judgment on Israel and warning the nations of coming judgment? It was because of their transgression and at the core of the issue was idolatry.

2. Micah laments the coming judgment. See Micah 1:8-15.

During times of grief, ancient Jews would often tear their clothes and put dirt on their heads. This is what Micah is referring to. He may have been particularly grieved because the towns that would be destroyed were in the region where he grew up. His hometown, Moresheth-Gath is in the list. This represented judgment on his childhood, his mom and dad, his siblings, his aunts and uncles and cousins, his family friends, they were all in the path of God's judgment. Of course he was grieved.

The judgment Micah prophesied wasn't just apocalyptic imagery. These were not the words of a fanatic preacher just trying to get attention. God's judgment had real consequences in real places. It still does. The consequences of sin and the judgment of God against it still affects communities, regions, and nations. But God's people were not without hope. God sent the prophet to call them to join the lament. He was offering an opportunity to repent of their sin. Micah's job was to announce the judgment in hope that God's people would turn away from their wickedness.

Shouldn't *we* mourn for the sin of *our* culture? Shouldn't we be brokenhearted about judgment? Do we think that God's judgment against sin and the tragedies the world experiences as a result of sin won't extend beyond the places we see on TV, to our own neck of the woods? And shouldn't we be grieved about the kind of situation we are leaving for the coming generation? Hasn't our culture left them a mess?

Even churches leave messes for their children, systems filled with division and envy and jealousy and strife. Pews filled with people who want their ears tickled so they don't have to consider the judgment that awaits if our nation and our communities and our churches don't turn away from their sin. Micah challenges us that we should lament the sin that leads to death. How should Christians lament this sin?

1. We can repent of our involvement in it.

Just like the sin of Samaria had come right up to the gates of Jerusalem, so the sins of our culture have come right up to the gates of the church. The influence of the world has crashed like waves against the walls of the church for decades, sometimes eroding those walls away. Brothers and sisters, judgment is coming to our world. God has provided us a way of escape through His Son Jesus, but we need to recognize when the sin of the world has come right to our own gates and we have been influenced to look more like the world than like Jesus. We are called to warn the world of God's judgment, but we first have to repent our involvement in the world's sin.

2. We can raise a prophetic cry for the Gospel. See John 3:36; Romans 10:14-15.

As we saw last week, a prophetic voice, like Micah's, includes pointing to both the judgment and mercy of God. Like Micah, shouldn't we be brokenhearted and urgent for the lost? Shouldn't we mourn the sin of our culture and what it will mean for them? Micah knew that God's judgment wasn't a metaphor but meant real consequences for real people in real places. The people in our families, communities, country, and world are in danger of suffering from God's wrath. We are not the Savior and we cannot save them, but we can proclaim the good news that God has provided a way to be saved from His wrath.

I fear that we are too unaffected by the urgency of God's judgment. Perhaps we are too comfortable. Perhaps we have not paid attention to the signs of the times, the wars, natural disasters, multiplying sin, and humanity's futile attempts to find its own peace and salvation. Whatever the reason, Micah calls us to raise a prophetic voice for the Gospel, to join the urgent cry. To be reminded that the places and people we love will be judged and they need to be warned. We can point to the brokenness of our world and the judgment of God against sin. We can warn people of the future judgment of the world. We can declare the wrath of God that was poured out on Jesus so that we can be right with God and experience life.

3. We can be bold for coming generations.

The culture and worldview that are being left to our children and grandchildren is perverse. They are told that morals can exist without any objective basis, like God, and they eat it up because it means that they get to make their own morals up. They've believed the lie that love and compassion are equivalent to affirmation, even if it's going to hurt the person to just let them proceed in their sin. They have been taught by the previous generation to love perversion, pursue their sexual fetishes, live selfishly, trust the experts rather than their parents, make their own meaning, and resist any role or identity that would obligate them to others so that marriage and parenthood are viewed as optional pursuits if they suit their needs, rather than an expression of covenant faithfulness before God. Church, we should be grieved by this. If we will seek the Holy Spirit and begin to raise

the prophetic voice here, the voice of the Spirit will be heard in our souls. He will begin to press, nudge, and call. He will raise up gifts and ministries among us if we are willing to obey in faith and courage.

Conclusion

Micah is no obscure prophet speaking to some antiquated situation in the Ancient Near East. He spoke the Word of the Lord that echoes right down into our hearts today. We should be grieved by the sin of our people and the judgment that awaits. We should join the lamentation that will cause us to repent, raise a prophetic voice, and be bold for coming generations.