

LESSON 9 – HOPE IS OUR STRATEGY

MAY 31, 2020

Background Scripture: Micah 7

Lesson Passage: Micah 7:1-7 (KJV)

Introduction: *Hope* is an active, empowering, constructive attitude that creates conditions for success by focusing and acting on possibilities and opportunities. *Hope* is the attitude of champions, the fuel of optimism, the enemy of despair, and the creator of the future. *Hope* is a general disposition to expect the best possible outcome or dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation. It is a positive and empowering rational attitude toward our individual and collective possibilities. *Hope* is the belief that our future will contain desirable outcomes. *Hope* is the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness. Despite the dire warnings and threats of punishments, war and captivity, Micah has a most encouraging and reassuring message of future hope, peace and an abundant life for all peoples and nations. Which definition of “hope” is Micah’s “strategy”?

Scripture Reference: Micah 7:1-7 (KJV)

1 Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit. 2 The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. 3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. 4 The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. 5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore, I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Memory Verse: 6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house. Therefore, I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me (Micah 7:1-7) KJV

Topic Explored: “*Hope is our Strategy*” ~ Your favorite football team has lost eight consecutive games. With each loss, it’s harder to hope the season can be redeemed for them. The coach has made changes weekly, but they haven’t resulted in wins. Talking with your coworkers, you’ve joked that merely wanting a different outcome can’t guarantee it. In other words, “*Hope is not a strategy*”. That’s true in football. But in our spiritual lives, it’s just the opposite. Not only is cultivating hope in God a strategy, but clinging to Him in faith and trust is the *only* strategy. This world often disappoints us, but hope can anchor us in God’s truth and power during the turbulent times. Micah understood this reality. He was heartbroken by how Israel had turned away from God. What does it take to maintain hope in harsh times? Micah shows us: Watching. Waiting. Praying. Remembering. God hears our cries even when our circumstances are overwhelming. In these moments, clinging to and acting in response to our hope in God is our strategy, the only strategy that will help us weather life’s storms.

Lesson Focus: Micah 7:1-7 (KJV)

Verses 1-2: Micah lamented the circumstances of his day. In his vain search for an upright person (verse 2), he compared himself to the vinedresser who enters his vineyard late in the season and finds no fruit. The leaders conspired together to get what they wanted (verse 3). No one could be trusted (verses 5-6). Christ used (verse 6), as an illustration when He commissioned the twelve (Matt. 10:1, 35-36). "Woe is me": Micah gives a fearful picture of the demoralized state of society in Judah which had called down the vengeance of God. As the early fig gathered in June is eagerly sought for by the traveler, so the prophet sought anxiously for a good man; but his experience was that of the Psalmist: "The godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men." Micah sounded like Isaiah (Isa. 6:5).

Micah is speaking for a penitent people, who know they have sinned, and, been judged, and set for punishment. Perhaps, the thing they are most sorry for is their lack of blessings from God now. Woe is me, seems as if they are feeling sorry for themselves. Suddenly, there are no blessings from God. Their desire for their first relationship with God to be back is evident here.

"The good man": who loves and is kind to men in need, and is so from the sense of God's goodness, and in a designed imitation of God. Is godly in the frame of his heart and course of life towards God, and beneficent to men for God's sake. Is perished": Is dead and gone, and left no heir of his godlike virtues. Out of Israel and Judah too, though Hezekiah was (probably), now their king.

"None upright": An honest, plain-hearted man, who thinks no deceit, but speaketh the truth, that is, without crooked and perverse designs. Such a one may possibly, but not easily, be found among the people of the ten opposite of the two tribes. "The good man": Who loves and is kind to men in need, and is so from the sense of God's goodness, and in a designed imitation of God. Is godly in the frame of his heart and course of life towards God, and beneficent to men for God's sake.

This proves the prophet's charge against this people, for the good and upright man imagined no evil against any. But it is evident that in Israel (and Judah too), the temper of the most was sly, designing, and watching to do mischief. To the ruining of families, the murdering of innocents, and seizing their estates, Ahab like (1 Kings 21; Prov. 1:19). The net, which in the Hebrew term comes from a verb meaning to shut up, was used both by the fisherman and the fowler. "They lay wait for one another, as hunters for wild beasts." This is speaking of a society that has no morals at all. They are degraded, to where it would be difficult to find even one person living for God. They will even murder, if it will help their personal cause. When they should be trying to help their brother, they are scheming every way they know how to cheat him.

Verses 3, 4 ~ All three, prince, judge, and great man, wrap it up, or twist it together. Consent each to other, and jointly promote violence and bloody cruelty. This is speaking of cheating and stealing to the utmost. Their hands are seeking evil things to do. It appears the judges are taking bribes as well. The gentlest of them is a thorn, strong, hard, and piercing, which lets nothing unresisting pass by but it takes from it, "robbing the fleece, and wounding the sheep." "The most upright" are those who, in comparison of others; are worse, or seem so. They are not like it only but worse, and that in all ways; none is specified and so not included. They were more crooked, more tangled, and sharper. Both, as hedges, were set for protection; both turned to injury. Jerome: "So that, where you would look for help, thence comes suffering." And if such be the best, what about the rest? The day foretold by thy (true), prophets, as the time of "thy visitation" in wrath (Grotius). Or "the day of thy false prophets being punished"; they are specially threatened as

being not only blind themselves, but leading others blindfolded. Nothing now hinders the "visitation", which "thy watchmen" or prophets had so long foreseen and forewarned of.

"Now" without delay; for the day of destruction comes suddenly upon the sinner. They should be caught in their own snare; they had perplexed their paths and should find no outlet. Micah is saying, this should be the day of the watchmen. The watchmen have warned them of their evil, and now the day of their judgment is here. This day of perplexity will be a day, when the Lord will chastise them for the evil they have done. God will send deliverance, but it will not be until they have been punished for their sins.

Verses 5, 6 ~All is now distrust and suspicion. The households are divided each against itself, and the relationships which should mean mutual confidence and support have become the occasion of the bitterest hostility. First, "the friend" or neighbor, the common band of man and man; then "the guide" (or as the word also means, one "familiar"). United by intimacy, to whom by continual communications, the soul was "used". Then the wife who lay in the bosom, nearest to the secrets of the heart. This is a time when you cannot even confide in a friend. The guide will lead you to your own destruction. The guide has been an extremely close friend whom you had taken advice from, but you must not take that advice anymore. This is saying that you should even be careful what you say to your wife, or girlfriend.

The son dishonors his father. Shows him no respect and reverence; exposes his failings, and makes him the object of his banter and ridicule—a son who ought to have honored, revered, and obeyed him, being the instrument of his being, by whom he was brought up, fed, clothed, and provided for; base ingratitude! The daughter, who has been nurtured and loved by her mother, loses her natural affection, and forgetting both her relation replies to her mother in disrespect. She opposes and disobeys her. The daughter-in-law is against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own house. His sons and his servants should honor his person, defend his property, and promote his interest. But, instead of that, they do everything that is injurious to him.

Verse 7 ~ In spite of his dire circumstances, Micah, as a watchman (verse 4), would intently look for evidence of God's working. Trusting God to act in His own time and way (Habakkuk 3:16-19). The God of my salvation is of course, Jesus Christ. They will wait, and trust and He will come.

Let's talk about it. . .

Making it personal:

- This lesson is a great reminder to keep going even when you fall, because you will rise up again. There are peaks, and there are valleys. We have great times in life that are followed by not-so-great times. The silver lining during those "down" times is that we know that they will eventually turn around. Even though there are days when we think "this day could not possibly get any worse" and then it does, we can find peace in the promise that though we fall, we will rise again. Hope is our strategy!

Closing Prayer: *"Father, You've promised to be an anchor for our hearts when circumstances look discouraging. Help us call out to You in faith and hope, believing that You hear our hearts' cries. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen!"*