

Introduction: People have basic questions that they need answered. How can I live a good life? How do I know what is good? If I know how to live a good life, how can I live the right way when I find myself living the wrong way? And, over all these questions, is the biggest question. Is there a God; and, if so, does He love me and will He help me? *** The excerpts from the words given to the prophet Micah over seven hundred years before God's Son, The Savior, was born to a woman named Mary, give an answer to all these questions. There IS a God, and He has told people how to live a good life. If people persist in rebellion to His ways, He will judge with fire. But, God will send out a ruler from Bethlehem when a woman gives birth to a shepherd ruler of peace. And people come to this God, who has given them His conditions to be His children, in humble faith. *** Still, no one can do this in his or her own strength. The ruler born of Mary told self-righteous religious leaders that He desires mercy over religious ritual; and, He came to call sinners into a right relationship with God. *** Let's go through the words we heard read this morning in detail. These words will flesh out the general truths I have been speaking; and, will give us some specific guidelines as to how to live lives pleasing to God.

I. Yahweh will destroy idolatry in fire and a woman give birth to a ruler of peace SO people do right and forgive in love by humble faith. (Micah 1:3-5; 5:2-5a; 6:6-8)

- A. Look! Yahweh is going out and has tread upon the high places, then the mountains will melt like wax before fire for the rebellion of Jacob. (Micah 1:3-5)
1. Because behold, Yahweh is going out from His place / He came down and tread on the high places / the mountains were melted under Him / and the valleys will be split open / as wax before fire / as water poured down a steep place. (Verses 3-4)
Coming down: In six poetic lines, The Covenant God of Israel is portrayed as coming down in judgment that destroys with fire and flood.
Tread on idols: The high places were where God's people scarified to the idols and 'gods' of the nations God told them to drive out so they would not be unfaithful to Him. He stomps them out.
Mountains and valleys: Mountains melt in flames and valleys break open as before spring floods.
 2. All this is of Jacob's transgression / and in the sins of Israel / who is the transgression of Jacob? / Is it not Samaria? (Verses 5a-d)
Transgression: Transgression is the strongest possible act of rebellious disobedience against God.
 3. Who are the high places of Judah? / Is it not Jerusalem? (Verses 5e-f)
Idols in temple: At this time king Ahaz of Judah and he ordered Uriah the priest to remove the altar from the temple court and build a replica of a pagan altar there (2 Kings 16). So, even Jerusalem will experience strong judgment. May we all fear God's extreme judgment on idolatry in our hearts.
- B. A ruler for Yahweh will go out from Bethlehem when she is birthing: one from eternity to stand and shepherd in Yahweh's Name, and this one is peace. (Micah 5:2-5a)
1. And you Bethlehem Ephrathah / little to be among the thousands of Judah / from you will go out for Me to be ruler in Israel. (Verses 2a-c)
Ruler out of Bethlehem: From the 'fruitful house of bread', a small town of many in Judah, a ruler will go out for The Covenant God of Israel.
 2. His origin from antiquity / from eternity. (Verses 2d-e)
Eternal origins: This ruler out of Bethlehem from God is eternal (as God is eternal).
 3. Therefore He will give them up until time of / her bearing has borne. (Verses 3a-b)
She has borne: The restoration of God's people will begin with a woman giving birth in Bethlehem.
 4. And the remnant of his brothers / will return to the sons of Israel. (Verses 3c-d)
Remnant of his brothers: A repenting remnant will come home to God's chosen people as brothers of this ruler.
 5. And He will arise and will shepherd (feed) / in the strength of Yahweh / in the majesty of The Name of Yahweh His God / and they have dwelt. (Verses 4a-d)
Shepherd: This ruler will be a shepherd feeding his sheep. The people in Micah's day would have known Yahweh is The Shepherd from Psalm 23. When Jesus taught His disciples more than seven hundred years after this, He said He IS The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18).
Strength: He will be a strong ruler in addition to being a shepherd of his sheep who dwell in his flock. In mercy and grace, he will be the faithful giver of faith to the faithful remnant (Ephesians 2:8-10).
- Rulers should exercise strength with mercy*
6. Because now he is great / to the ends of the earth. (Verses 4e-f)
The whole earth: Because he is eternal, he is great before the woman bore him. His greatness will be experienced throughout all the earth. This prophecy points to Jesus, The Savior-King of all the earth.
 7. And this one has been peace. (Verse 5a)
Peace: Whatever peace there is in the world is because of who Jesus IS and all He has done. He is The Prince of peace from before Bethlehem (Isaiah 9:1-7; Ephesians 2:13-15; Philippians 4:4-7).
I hope we can all see how Jesus fulfills these sixteen lines of prophecy.

C. How shall I go before Yahweh, burnt offerings, something extreme, for my transgressions? He has told you: do justice love kindness, walk humbly. (*Micah 6:6-8*)

1. In what will I go before Yahweh / and I will bow in submission to the high God? (*Verses 6a-b*)

Proper worship: It is proper worship when people bow with their faces to the ground before The Sovereign Creator and Redeemer

2. Will I come before Him with burnt offerings / with year old calves? / Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams / with ten thousand rivers of oil? (*Verses 6c-7b*)

Torah sanctioned: The person sacrificing a burnt offering was offering total devotion and surrender of himself or herself to God because the entire animal was consumed in fire (*Leviticus 1*). Rams were offered with oil for: peace offerings (*Leviticus 9:4*); vows and freewill offerings (*Numbers 15:1-6*); at the new moon (*Numbers 28:11-12*); and at the Feast of Trumpets (*Numbers 29:1-8*).

3. Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, / the fruit of my body for my soul sin? (*Verses 7c-d*)

Pagan profanity: The pagan nations God drove out before the sons of Israel offered child sacrifices to their 'gods'; but, this profanes Yahweh's Name (*Leviticus 18:21*). Any who do this must be put to death (*Leviticus 20:1-5*). Jeremiah spoke against it over one hundred years later (*Jeremiah 7:30-34*).

4. He has declared to you, O man, what is good / and what is Yahweh seeking from you? / except to do justice, and to love merciful loving-kindness / and to walk humbly with your God. (*Verse 8*)

God has spoken: God has clearly declared to all people what He is seeking from them.

Three things: First, that they do justice – be fair and righteous. Second, that they love with God's strong life-giving, life-changing mercy-love. Third, that they walk (live) humbly (in faith) with their God (in right relationship with Him). Putting it all together, peace will come when people love with the strong merciful love of the ruler from Bethlehem and by humble faith they do righteous justice.

Peace comes when mercy humbly does justice

Fair and forgive: Justice is fairness and merciful love forgives. Call this 'just mercy'. I highly recommend you borrow from the library system the book '*Just Mercy*' by Bryan Stephenson. He is a lawyer working through the courts to insure that those in power be open to mercy for those being oppressed, especially due to injustice and prejudice.

Rulers should exercise strength with mercy

Grace: All of this is a gift of grace from God.

Peace comes when mercy humbly does justice

Humble faith: Let us understand God's gift of grace to sinners IN Jesus, who came to call sinners to mercy and give them the ability to do justice love with His love. And let us live before God in humble faith, NOT with our own self-righteous works.

Peace comes when mercy humbly does justice

II. Jesus told the Pharisees that they must learn He desires mercy not sacrifice because He did not come to call righteous ones but sinners. (*Matthew 9:13*)

A. Background. (*Verses 9-12*)

Context: Jesus had just called Matthew, a Jewish tax collector for Rome who cheated his fellow Jews, to follow Him.

Jesus ate at Matthew's house with many tax collectors and sinners. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus' disciples about this, He answered for Himself. He began by saying doctors are not needed by healthy people, but by sick people.

B. Mercy to sinners. (*Verse 13*)

Mercy greater than sacrifice: Jesus commands them to learn what God meant when He inspired *Hosea (6:6)* to write, 'I am desiring mercy, not sacrifice'. This also echoes the last words we considered from Micah. God saves people in His mercy by graciously giving faith to all who receive Him. No sacrifice we make can save us, but only the sacrifice of Jesus on The Cross for us can save us.

Call sinners: Jesus is still calling sinners. Will we acknowledge all our sins to Jesus and respond to the merciful call of The King of kings to sinners like us? And, will we come to Him to be forgiven, and to be enabled and empowered to live lives pleasing to Him, by grace through faith? Jesus is the merciful King.

Rulers should exercise strength with mercy

Conclusion: Through His prophet, God communicates that He will judge idolatry as rebellion against Him; but, He will send a shepherd ruler of peace born of a woman in Bethlehem SO people can live by humble faith, as He told them. Jesus expands on these words, saying He desires mercy over the efforts of people; and, He came to call sinners over self-righteous people.

Peace comes when mercy humbly does justice