

## What The Future Holds

On Sunday we continued our sermon series called “Eight EPIC Bible Passages.” Tonight we’ll talk about the fourth epic passage – Micah 4:1-4.

1. Warm up question: When we were growing up, there were certain things our mothers would say over and over again. Things like, “Money doesn’t grow on trees.” What were some of your Mom’s most commonly repeated statements?
2. The prophet Micah was a younger contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. One of Isaiah’s prophecies (Isaiah 2:2-4) had such an impact on Micah, Micah was inspired repeat it verbatim in his own book. Apparently the Holy Spirit considered the words of this prophecy to be so important, they needed to be repeated for emphasis. So let’s take a look at this famous vision of the future. Read Micah 4:1-4.
  - a. Micah envisions a future time when virtually everyone in the world will give highest priority to going to temple (i.e., houses of worship) to learn important principles about spiritual living. A lot of times we hear people say they don’t need organized religion to thrive spiritually. What do you think? Is going to temple important to you – why or why not?
  - b. In Micah’s prophecy, people aren’t going to temple simply to “learn right ways,” but also “that we may walk in God’s paths.” Micah envisions a time in the future when people don’t just talk-the-talk, but also walk-the-walk. Comedian C.K. Louis sums up the difference in the following words:

“I have a lot of beliefs. . . , and I live by none of them. That’s just the way I am. They’re just *my* beliefs. I just like believing them – I like that part. They’re my little “believies.” They make me feel good about who I am. But if they get in the way of the thing I want, I [just do whatever the heck I want to].”

What are your thoughts about C.K.’s quote? Is he on the mark? Why is there often such a gap between what people profess and how they live?
  - c. Jeff told a story about a guy who volunteered to give up his window seat on a plane for a middle seat in the very back, so a mother could sit in the same row with her two kids. That’s an example of someone living the values we claim to believe. Think back over your past week to a time (large or small) where you had a chance to live your spiritual values. How did you respond? Was your response consistent with what you believe? If not, what went wrong?
  - d. How can we become more consistent in living our spiritual values? What helps you be more consistent? Any practical tips?
3. Micah’s prophecy suggests that, when enough people begin to authentically live their spiritual values, a Golden Age will dawn. In the rest of his prophecy, Micah

highlights two fundamental shifts that will occur inside ourselves and our culture when enough of us start living our spiritual values. The first great shift is away from vengeance toward peacemaking. Verse 3 says, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. . . . Neither shall they learn war anymore.”

- a. In your life right now, who are you tempted to be at war with?
  - b. Leo Tolstoy said, “Everybody wants to change the world, but nobody wants to change himself/herself.” Why is it so hard to be a peacemaker?
  - c. None of us believes in “peace at any price” – nor does the Bible call us to that kind of false peace. It’s important to challenge things that are wrong. Is there a way to do both, i.e., to create positive change and do so in a way that maximizes the chances for peace? Have you ever seen someone do this well? What did they do?
  - d. Read Romans 12:14-21. What insights do you draw from this passage?
4. Verse 4 of Micah’s prophecy highlights a second fundamental shift that occurs when people start living their spiritual values. It becomes important to us that everyone be able to “sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees.” In other words, it becomes important to us that everyone has a place to live and enough food to eat. No one has too much, and no one too little. Instead of just looking after ourselves, we care deeply about those around us.
- a. Do you feel you are more generous, more willing to share, now than you were ten years ago? Is your generosity growing?
  - b. Is it possible to live with a deep empathetic connection to those who lack without being overwhelmed by the magnitude of need all around us?
  - c. Just how generous and “others-focused” does God expect us to be?
5. Not all Christians interpret the Bible’s end-times prophecies in the same way. Some believe the world will get worse and worse until it descend into a war so cataclysmic that God is forced to intervene directly. Others believe the Bible teaches that history will slowly build to a triumphant Golden Age. Yet others believe the Bible prophecies mean that we humans will keep cycling through seasons of tragedy and triumph indefinitely in every age of history.
- a. What’s your view – and why? Does it matter how we see the end-times?
  - b. As followers of Jesus, do you think we have an obligation to try to move the world toward a Golden Age of peace and shared bounty? Do you think Micah’s prophecy will ever come true? Why or why not?