

UNABANDONED

A Study in the Book of Micah

Week 2: Restorative Judgement

Introduction:

Judgement for evil is right. We all expect justice and we certainly expect it from God. God would not be just if he did not judge fairly. But he is not just fair, he is also merciful. In the Old Testament, instead of punishing his people for their sin every time, God would patiently call them to repentance, giving them the opportunity to turn back to him. God has always delayed his judgement, and extended mercy to his people – because he is gracious. Even now, Jesus has not yet returned to judge the living and the dead, because he wants more people to repent and turn to him.

This week's Text: Micah 1 – 2:11

Points To Discuss:

1. God is the righteous judge who judges rightly

Micah was God's prophet, sent to warn the people of the judgement that was coming their way. God had all the evidence against them, and they were 100% guilty. The people needed to be reminded of how powerful God was, and how small they were. They had forgotten who it was that they served. The very one who spoke the universe into existence is the one they transgressed. The Israelites had been worshipping idols, the very thing that God had forbidden in the ten commandments.

In Micah's day, the desire to worship something seen, was indulged in the form of a religious statue that had some sort of significance attached to it. In our context, we do not build statues to worship, but we do have the same heart-struggle with worshipping an unseen God today. We too, desire to worship something that we can see, because it gives us a false sense of control and satisfaction.

Our "idols" today are not religious, like in Micah's day, but instead are things we worship (devote ourselves to) in order to experience the fulfilment of our desires. We will devote ourselves to anything that will make us feel good. For example, if we want affirmation, we will become slaves to other people's opinions of us, and we will do whatever it takes to get it. Or, if we crave security, we will work ridiculous hours and make absurd sacrifices to get that desire for security met. We will devote ourselves and give everything we have to the thing we crave the most. Just take a moment to think about where you spend your time, money and energy.

At its heart, idolatry is saying to God that he is not good enough to be number one and that he is not able to provide for our needs. In essence, this means we are calling God a liar, as he has promised to provide for all of our needs (Philippians 4:19). It is also saying to him that we will not obey his word, but that we would rather choose our own way, and devote ourselves to that. Idolatry boils down to pride, because it rejects God and chooses self.

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2. God is a good father who mourns his people's idolatry

God isn't just the righteous judge of Israel, he is also a good father – our rejection of God for lesser things is not only prideful and deeply sinful, it is also foolish. We were not created by God to serve lesser gods. If we malfunction in our design, there are terrible consequences. Our idols will destroy us. Not only does it break God's heart to watch our foolish decision to continually reject him to pursue idols, it also deeply concerns his heart. He knows that idols will break us, and he also knows that he is the only one who can actually satisfy the deep desires and longings in our heart. He created us to have one option for worship that is satisfying: the worship of him alone.

One of the consequences to rejecting God and choosing idols is that we become more and more deafened to hearing the warnings from God, and this is a scary place to be. We have all seen a friend/family member in 'self-destruct' mode. No matter how illogical their decisions are, they continue to make foolish choices and consequently go deeper and deeper into the pit of despair. Every voice of reason just bounces off, and everyone eventually takes a step back, because it seems as though they cannot hear or interpret the truth anymore. This is what happens to us when we do not heed the warning against feeding our idols. We start justifying our behaviour and telling ourselves that our choices are fine. We lose touch with the voice of God and we choose the lie.

God does not want his children trapped in sin, and so he gives us warnings and calls us to repent, and to choose him. When God disciplines us, it is for our good. No good father would allow us to remain in our sin for too long. What will we do with his warnings to repent and turn back to him?

Discussion Questions

- Explain what idolatry means in our context today, and why we struggle to identify with being idolaters?
- Why does our modern-day idolatry offend God just as deeply as it did in Micah's day?
- Why do you think it grieves God's heart so much when we choose to worship created things instead of him?
- Why do our idols eventually destroy us?
- Why do we become deafened/blinded to God's warnings, when we persist in our idolatry?
- What are the 2 things that come to your mind that you worship (devote your attention to because of a need you have?) instead of God. List them.
- Our idols will destroy us. In what way can you see this possibly happening in your own life if you do not repent of your idolatry?
- Consider one of the idols you listed above, and discuss some of the potential consequences to not heeding the warning, and holding on to these idols. Perhaps also consider some of the ways this has already started to impact your life already. Consider the impact on your closest relationships and on your spiritual life.