

## Don't Waster Your Suffering : Micah 4:6-5:15

### Intro:

One of the things we are bad at, is suffering well. And what I mean by suffering well, is suffering to the glory of God. To not suffer well is to suffer in such a way that God is not made much of, instead of being cherished and prized, He's hated or ignored.

Think about your life, when you have gone through suffering has not been moments where your flesh comes roaring out. Anger. Jealousy. Lack of trust in God. Run to idols.

The truth is, all of us are sufferers, we suffer in different ways and in different amounts at different times. Some of us more than others for sure. And whether we've through great suffering or little suffering, there is plenty more suffering that we shall go through.

The question I want to answer this morning, and that we see in Micah, is how we can suffer well to God's glory. If we don't suffer to God's glory, then suffering is a waste.

Now suffering is a huge topic, so this is by no means exhaustive. But this morning, from Micah 4 we are going to see three ways that we can glorify God in our suffering 1. Trust in the Lord's Plan. 2. We are to Worship the Lord's Messiah; 3. We are to Embrace the Lord's Discipline

As we jump in here, just a little bit of context for us. The people of God have entered to rampant wickedness, sin, idolatry, and oppression. They've lazy and complacent with God. And God, as he does, chooses to speak to these people, and raises up Micah to go and speak to the people to set them straight.

The words of Micah follow a sort of rhythm... basically deserved judgement and undeserved grace. God is just and will punish you for your sin, and God will one day restore you.

### 1. Trust in the Lord's Plan (4:6-13)

**In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted; and the lame I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore.**

**And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem.**

Micah begins with a word of future restoration, there's coming a day when there will be a special remnant saved and they will be gathered and blessed forever under the reign of the Lord. An incredible word of hope But before they can get to comfortable, Micah drops a bomb on them.

**Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor?**

**Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.**

**Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make**

**your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.**

So its going to get awesome, but before it does, It's going to get way worse.

“Groan like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in open country.” We have many new mothers and fathers in the room, who are freshly aware of the groaning of labor. When someone tells you to groan in labor, it's not something you get fired up about. Not something you instagram.

God's telling them, listen guys, I'm gonna bless you beyond your wildest dreams, that's all going to happen, for real, but it's gonna get worse before it gets better. Direct response to 3:12, “Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.”

What's God going to do? He's going to allow the Assyrians and Babylonians to overtake them. **“You shall go to Babylon.”**

I mean that would scare the mess out of you. Here you are in the Promised Land that God gave to the people as a fulfillment to Abraham and Moses, and you gotta understand that for the Jews their salvation was directly connected to this plot of Land and the Temple. And now they are told its all going to ruins and they are going to be exiled.

I mean can you imagine being invaded by a foreign enemy, having your city destroyed, and then being enslaved and taken to a foreign country. Horrific suffering physically, emotionally, relationally. Imagine the spiritual confusion. Exiled. It's gonna get bad.

I'm actually going to pour out judgement and pain on you, BUT later I'm gonna pour out grace and glory.

Llisten, v. 10 **“There (in exile) you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.**

**Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, “Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion.” But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; and shall devote their gain to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of the whole earth.**

What I want you to see here is the Lord sovereignly at work to prepare His people for salvation. It is God's plan to bring suffering and judgement on His people, till at just the right time he will rescue and deliver and redeem.

A good jeweler knows that when he wants to show off a diamond he places it on a black cloth. God's plan is to save and redeem and make His name glorious, and it's His grace and mercy that shines in its brilliance against this backdrop of judgement and destruction.

Suffering let's us know that we need Jesus, and suffering cultivates our affections for Jesus.

“18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen

is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. “ Romans 8:18-25

Guys, I don't know what suffering you've been through, or going through, or about to go through, and I don't know the cause of it, nor do i know the purpose of it, but this i do know, God knows. God knows your suffering, and there is design in it, as hard as that can be to fathom (just as if you were a Jew captive in Babylon).

The Scriptures hold out to you, trust God in your suffering. Trust He is working for His glory and your good. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” Prov. 3:5 You aren't called to make sense of everything, you are called to walk in faith despite knowing how everything fits together.

But this is what you can bank on...

10 “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” 1 peter 5:10

Suffering is real, and it hurts, but it is not meaningless, it's serving God's purposes. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2 Cor. 4

Our challenge this morning is trust God's plan no matter what we are going through. Whether we have blundered, and it's clearly suffering brought on by our own sin, or its suffering from other's sin, or simply suffering from living in a fallen world. Trust God.

One day everything will be made right. Glory follows affliction.

Next...

## **2. Worship the Lord's Messiah (5:1-9)**

**Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.**

**Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.**

**And he shall be their peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border.**

**Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver. Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.**

At the center of Micah's prophetic hope is the Lord's Messiah, the chosen One who will be usher in the new kingdom, who will gather the Israelites back together, in the Land that was Promised to Abraham, and who will establish Israel as the nation to bless all nations.

All eyes and hearts should be looking for this Messiah, but no one could have expected the type of Messiah God would send.

Out of the humblest of places, Bethlehem, which means "house of bread", a noname city with nothing special about it. Too little to even be counted among the clans of Judah. Reminds you of when the prophet came to find and anoint David, but he's not around and Samuel and all his brothers don't even think of him as a possibility.

That's what God does, He likes to show off His glory and power through weakness.

This man, the Christ, will "stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. The flock imagery is brought up, this great shepherd king who will gather the lost sheep of Israel, and protect them, and defeat all her enemies.

How's the Messiah going to accomplish this? As hard as it would be to imagine God coming to the earth as a humble servant from a noname city, all the more impossible to imagine God, the creator of the universe, dying as an innocent criminal at the hands of sinners.

The spiritual enemies that Micah prophecies to is the enemy of Satan. Satan would be killed as the Son of Man is crucified. It is the most ironic turn of events in all history. The death of death in the death of Christ.

And at once while the Devil is being overcome by Christ's work on the cross, so Christ is redeeming and rescuing and gathering His people. In the cross Christ would take care of man's biggest problem of sin and rightful judgement.

But what's so crazy is that Jesus takes the punishment for man. Just as the Jews were judged for their sin and exiled, so Jesus was exiled that they, and us, might be forgiven of sin and made righteous.

Jesus, the crucified, was raised to new life and with Him the new humanity of redeemed saints, the church. That's this remnant here.

**he shall be great to the ends of the earth.** How the Shepherd King is going to be great to the ends of the earth? Through His church advancing in the power of the Spirit under His Sovereign reign. Sword.

The church will carry out the Lord's plan until the final day of redemption when the new heavens and the new earth become manifest. A day when all the saints in Christ will rise, where true peace will be found, endless love and grace in the presence of Christ. No more sin, sickness, or death. No more war internally or externally, only peace.

Jesus is worthy of your worship. To suffer well means to lift your eyes to this Christ, embrace Him and His work on the cross for you. don't waste it, allow it to cause you to worship. A lot of people come to Christ through suffering.

### 3. Embrace The Lord's Discipline (5:10-15)

**And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities.**

**And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey.**

What we see here is that Micah is now prophesying to people of Judah that God is personally going to be purifying them of their sin and idolatry.

As much as the focus must be their obedience, and as much as obedience must be a choice we make, we see here a sovereign picture of God purifying his people into obedience.

What is God after? He's after the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength and soul.

Obedience can't begin with us... we are sinful and dead. In our flesh we are incapable of loving God. Our nature loves everything but God, right.

But as a potter shapes the clay, so God shapes us. And He'll use every means possible.

So there's a picture of judgement here, God sending His people into exile, but it's also a picture of purification, God stripping them of their trust and worship of other gods.

The Hebrews were trusting in other sources of strength and security.. horses and chariots. worldly power... cities. trusting in sorceries for knowledge and guidance and wealth. and pure idolatry of worship to other gods, carved images, the work of their own hands. There was the Asherah poles which were female deities that they worshiped.

All of this rampant sin, and the people unable to get themselves out of the grip of their flesh addiction. So God steps in.

You can't stop trusting in horses, i'm going to take them away. Those cities you love, gone. Won't stop seeking the witches and sorcerers, i'll take them away. Your idols, I'll crush them. Your comfort from a physical, worldly perspective... gone.

Here's the grace in this... While God's anger burns against their sin, God's heart burns for their redemption. Sending them into suffering and exile is the way God is going to love them.

"The rod has been baptized in deep affection before it is laid on the believer's back" - spurgeon

This is the same for us. When we go through suffering and trials of any kind, it is an opportunity to draw closer to the Lord and to be purified.

For the believer, discipline, or suffering and trials and afflictions are to be embraced as a gift...

Hebrews 12:6-11, **“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.**

**For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”**

**It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. “**

None of us are beyond the need for Sovereign, Fatherly discipline. We all can grow in holiness, and we all can grow as this text ends, yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Church, suffering is the wonderful gift no one wants. When we open up presents on Christmas, we want toys, right? Or “blessings” things that are easy and happy? Can you imagine opening a present and it saying, you are going to lose a loved one this year, you will get cancer, you will lose your job, and its going to be very difficult, but when its over you will look more like Jesus.

What would you do? Would you take the comfortable present that leaves you looking like a demon, take suffering that leaves you looking like Jesus?

That’s not how we are, but that’s what God’s trying to get us to see.

**Romans 5:3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

Whatever you are going through right now, or will go through in the future, consider suffering an opportunity to be shaped into the likeness of Christ. Glory follows affliction.

“If any other condition would have been better for you then where you are at, divine love would have put you there.” -Spurgeon

if you are an unbeliever, you don’t have these promises. The only way to have the promise is to take Christ. Your suffering is not discipline, your suffering is true judgement and a foretaste of hell.

conclusion:

We can suffer well because we have a Savior who suffered well in our place. We can suffer well because we know our suffering will one day end, and we will be with Christ. Let’s suffer well by trusting in God’s sovereign plan, embracing His discipline, and worshiping The Son. If we do that, God will be glorified, and our suffering will not be wasted.

Let’s pray.