

The Selfish Kingdom

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[0 : 0 0] And again, carrying on from last week we began looking at Micah chapter 1 and working away now to chapter 2, again taking the whole chapter in a really brief overview of what's going on in the chapter. Like we said last week, Micah was a contemporary to Isaiah. And last week we saw how the people of God had fallen into sin and fallen into idol worship. Last week in chapter 1 we saw a chapter full of vivid descriptions of God's wrath and God's judgment. And it's a chapter that is heavy to read, a chapter that's heavy to go through.

But we did say that it is the first chapter of the book. And of course there's not perhaps much glimmer of any sort of potential hope in that chapter. We know that there's more to come. In that first chapter it's clear, it's vivid, it's precise at reminding us that we as God's people that we are so prone to falling into old sins. We are so prone to seeing the sin in the world but not seeing the sin as aware in our own camp and in our own lives. Micah chapter 2 starts off perhaps as we left in chapter 1 and we see more of condemnations on more sins of the people. But in Micah chapter 2 like we promised last week we begin to see more and more of a glimmer of hope that God is offering his people. Yes, there's more judgment to come. Yes, there's more sin being pointed at. Yes, God's people are being shown in more detailed ways of just how far they've gone away from him. But also we see that there's something else going on in the background. If after last week you're still wondering does Micah actually have anything still to say to us today, a good few thousand years on, a good few thousand miles away, hopefully after last week if we're not still convinced then as we read chapter 2 together and look at chapter 2 together we will see that in Micah that just as God's people of then were so lost and needed so much guidance and needed so much help that we today are no different. But we are still prone to the same sins that they were. But like we said there is one crucial difference in chapter 2 that's found in the last few verses where we see more than a glimmer of hope, we see that God in the last few verses speaks to his people. This time not in judgment but in tender care and a tender tone God reveals something to them. He promises something to them. But despite their self-serving or selfish, their own idolatrous ways, that one was coming who would lead them on to something else. So again very briefly looking at chapter 2 under three rough headings.

First of all looking at verses 1 down to verse 5 where we see a life of material selfishness, a life of material selfishness. Then verses 6 down to verse 11 we see a life of spiritual selfishness, a life of spiritual selfishness. Then finally verses 12 to the end of verse 13 we see a life led by the king, a life led by the king. So starting off with verses 1, roughly verses 1 down to verse 5, a life of material selfishness. We read these verses in verses 1 and verse 5 and what's painted for us is a description of a lifestyle of cheating, thieving of lies. A description of those whose whole lives consist of ways they can get richer, ways to improve their own lives, always at the expense of those around them. We see this in verses 1 and verse 2. What lies at the heart of this sin, what lies at the heart of all this, what's the sin of coveting? They have broken and we're still breaking the tenth commandment.

And as we said last week it's helpful perhaps to have the Bibles open in front of us, we'll be going around this chapter, perhaps going back into the first chapter as we've gone through this evening.

So we'll see what's described in verses 1 and verse 2. They are breaking the tenth commandment. They were looking for things that weren't theirs and doing whatever they could to get them.

[5 : 25] Look with me to verse 1. We see that they don't even wait until they've woken up properly. But the second that they're awake, their eyes open in the morning, what are we doing? They're working evil.

Quite literally they're planning out evil. They're devising evil in their beds. They're lying there and thinking what can we do today to improve our lives? What can I do to make my life better today?

Forgetting everyone else. I don't care. My life is important. How can I make it better today? Before they leave you put one foot out of bed. They are scheming and devising ways they can do all they want to do. Like you said, why are they doing it?

Well, Micah gives us a simple answer. The last sentence, the last half sentence of verse 1. They perform it because it's in the power of their hands. They do it because they can.

They got the power. They got the money. They do what they want with whoever they want because they can. They go out, take away land, seize houses. Everything else they do in this chapter have been described to us. We take away not only land, we take away worth. We take away dignity of the people they are attacking. Much as we have in our own islands, our own culture today, land and crops, the equivalent of these days, you're passed down very often. Passed down as inheritance, passed down from family to family. They're part of who you were as a family. Your family that we are lived on, whatever crops they had in Micah's day. Be mind, Micah was speaking as a shepherd or someone who lived in a shepherd in community. Again, much like ourselves, land was important. It wasn't just valuable. It was part of who you were. And these people were stealing that from them. We see that in verse 2. They covet fields, they seize them.

[7 : 37] Houses take them away. They oppress a man in his house, a man and his inheritance. What he received from his parents was gone. What he had planned to give to his children is gone. Part of who he is is now gone because of his selfish lifestyles of these people.

Again, this is something I'm sure we're all too well aware of even in our own history as an island. Those with power, those of authority, taking away the land from the people and using it for their own purposes, very often as we know ourselves, sending the people out to land that wasn't livable or even worse, sending the people away from the island. Same thing, same image, the same image that's being used here, the same thing was happening in Micah's day here.

The rich and powerful were abusing repositions and making the most of it. Last week we saw that God takes very seriously when we sin against him and put other gods before him. But here we see that God also takes very seriously the lives of his people, the lives of those who are down-threaded and the lives of those who are oppressed, the lives of those who are suffering at the hands of those above them, those who have been denied their dignity.

And we see from the way that God deals with these oppressors, those who are found cheating people out of their land, the way God deals with them, it shows how seriously God takes this sin, it shows how seriously God cares for these people who are oppressed.

That's what we have in verse 3 down to verse 5. In verse 3 we see that this selfish, material-based lifestyle where material possessions is all that they are living for, that it will eventually have its cost for these people. And in the coming destruction we saw last week that in that they too will face consequences. What's going to happen while we have this prophecy? Verses 3 to verse 5. The invading army will come, what will they do? They will take the fields, take the goods, they apostate to the end of verse 4. To apostate to a lot to their fields. This man who serves our gods, the godless army, they will come and they will take your possessions, take your fields. The one who happily stole the inheritance of others will have his inheritance stolen away from them as we have in verse 5. So verse 5 is telling us, you will have no lineage, you will have no people after you, you have no one to pass your possessions onto. God doesn't just care, we could say, about the major things that happen in the world.

[10:59] Our king cares for his people on a minute level as I'm sure evocation here knows fine well. We pray about the big things happening in the world around us. Sometimes we forget to pray for the small things perhaps in our lives, the things that we need desperate prayer for. Because even the small things are beyond our control in many ways and in many times. The king who here cares, the oppressed ones still cares for us today. There's more happening here. It's not good.

Who is doing this oppressing first of all? In the first sentence of chapter 2, woe to those who devise wickedness and so on. Who are those who are the ones doing all this oppressing?

It's coming from inside the camp. These are other people, these are neighbours. These are other people who are calling themselves the children of God who are oppressing their fellow children of God. Neighbours oppressing fellow neighbours, worshippers of God oppressing fellow worshippers of God as aware this sin is inside the camp. Hopefully we remember from last week how quickly and easily we like to detach ourselves from the sin we read about in the Old Testament of how we would never be like that. They were like that. We would never be like that today.

Last week we saw how people had turned to idols, how they had become selfish, been attached to worshipping themselves and here we see the people had become attached to material gain, attached to things, attached to whatever they could get for them.

They might be here just now saying, oh this is not me. Whatever you're saying, this is not me. This is silly. I've never treated anybody out of our land. I've never stolen anybody's inheritance.

[13:15] This has no application to me whatsoever. You're wasting my time. The reality is we don't work out the sins perhaps in the same way but the same sin that lay at the heart of these men who did this awful thing also lies in our hearts too. And speaking here especially to those who are Christians, we're so quick to see the sin of the world but so slow to see the sin in our own hearts and in our own lives. Our sin doesn't work out the same way that they did but the same root is there. Like we said, what is the root of the sin? Well, we have it in verse 2.

It's coveting. Coveting. The word in verse 2, the covet feels, quite literally that reads, they have a strong desire for fields. The word is for covet. It's the strongest word you can use in that context. There's no word stronger you could use to describe what's happening there. They really want these fields and they will get them. Perhaps we don't have the wealth to steal from others.

Maybe we do. We're not buying up the land from others in our church, others in our villages but we all still covet. We all still desire and want the things we can have. We're all still blinded by things in general. Even what we're realizing would become blinded to the reality of just how futile things are. We hear examples so often of the next big car, the next best job but even in small things and in small ways we as Christians can lose sight that this world is not our home, what we are passing through. We spend so much time worrying about stuff and things and material things that we forget that we're called to care about things so much more and things that are much, much greater. As Jesus himself reminds us in Matthew 6 verses and words we all know, no one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Perhaps we're here and we miss spend our finances and things that are ungodly. Perhaps we don't have much finance, we have lots of time in our hands and we spend as it were our time badly. We spend our time to serve ourselves rather than to serve God and serve and be with his people.

God takes seriously how his people are treated even when that mistreatment comes from within the camp, from within the church itself. Let's be careful that we are not selfish with our lives, we're not selfish with our time, we're not selfish with our material possessions like these people were. Their lives were blinkered by their coveting, they were blinkered by their desire, their long forgotten who they were and who they were called to be.

Then in verses 6 down to verse 11 so we had there in verses 1 verse 5 we had the material selfishness then in verses 6 to 11 we have we could say a spiritual selfishness. It's not only material things we see these people suffering with and falling prey to, we also see they had become spiritually selfish like we said we have that in verses 6 down roughly to verse 11. From these verses we see the people they were they were hearing and they were listening to preaching that they were happy to hear and happy to listen to. They were still spiritual, they were still hearing preaching, still going to hear preaching, still be engaged in preaching. But this preaching was selfish, preaching a message was not a true message. What they heard, what they went after was something that caused them no problems, a message that was always positive, I was just what they wanted to hear, a message that acquired no change in their lives. We see that in verse 6 we see what was being said perhaps to Micah himself or what was being said in the day. Don't you dare say that. Stop saying what you're going on about. One should not preach of such things.

[18 : 31] Disgrace will not overtake us. There's no destruction coming. This Micah guy, the shepherd from the hills who's just miserable, depressing, talking rubbish, stop listening to him.

There's no danger, you're fine, fine, don't worry, it's all good. Relax. We're doing well, our country's doing well, we haven't had a war in years, there seems to be crops, we're all well fed, there's money in the land, we're happy to listen to this man who's telling you these things. I wonder if that strikes a chord with us today. Certainly strikes a chord with many around the world, many of us even perhaps, only you know the reality that we spend hours happily listening or thinking about nothing but feel good pep talks, preachers or messages that only speak to emotions but have no real truth behind them. This applies to those who are here this evening as Christians and as non-Christians, to those here who are not yet part of the church, to those here who are off yet are still outside of the church. We all hate to hear the truth, if we're honest right now, we all admit we hate to hear the truth, especially when that truth is about ourselves.

When that truth is painting a picture of us that we don't like to hear. Micah is bringing the people the message they need to hear, he's telling them the truth they need to listen to. Micah is telling them listen to what God is saying, God is saying turn back to him or you will be destroyed. Listen to the message I have from God, he sees you, he knows you and despite what these others are saying, despite their calls for calm and quiet, despite their calls through lax and it's all well, it's all good, the news is not good for you. If nothing changes the news for you is awful, destruction is coming. The reality is these people had and were going to answer to God but they were accountable to their maker and to their creator. That wasn't a popular message in Micah's day, it's certainly not a popular message for us either. It's not a popular message even last Sunday morning we saw that, in the account in Acts 17 talking where Paul and his company were there and what was the accusation, these men have come and they've turned the world upside down, they've ruined everything, they've made a mess of our plans, made a mess of our synagogue, made a mess of our city, they've come here saying there is never a king apart from Caesar, there is a king other than Caesar. And that message today is still the same as we share the gospel lovingly and carefully and with genuine empathy and affection to our friends and to our family members, to those we work with, those in our villages with us, as we tell them there is only one way to heaven, there is only one king, there's only one saviour. That message is still not popular today. As we lovingly tell them please believe in this gospel, please believe in what's being said to you otherwise destruction is coming and there is a point coming when it will be too late to turn back.

That's never going to be a popular message, the gospel never has been and never will be popular, Christians never have been and never will be popular. That's not a bad thing. As long as our unpopularity comes from the gospel, not from who we are personally. In our country, in our island, perhaps even right now in our own houses, there are many, many who have no idea who Jesus is, who have no idea of their need for him. Even some here this evening I'm sure who as of yet you have not turned to Jesus. You're still rejecting him, still rejecting him as your Lord, as your Savior.

In reality is Jesus is king, he's king wherever you worship him or not, that makes no difference, he is still king. The reality is you ever know him and serve him and love him. You ever have him as king and you are there as a servant, but also as his brother or you have him as king and you are still his enemy. The message Micah gave to his people, the same message we have today, destruction is coming, but there is total and perfect and eternal security to be found in Jesus.

[24 : 05] Rewarmed in Second Timothy, the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but have itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

The folks in Micah's day were doing that already, they were turning their ears off to the bad stuff and ignoring the reality of what was coming towards them.

In verses 7 down to verse 9 we see just a compounding of offenses that people are doing, 7 to verse 9 and we can almost relate that back again to verses 1 to 5, just a mess.

Society was a mess, their lives were a mess, even folks passing by with trustworthy intentions were robbed of their clothes, robbed of their robes, people innocently in their houses were driven out, children taken away, a mess of a society.

Interesting that these verses from verses 7 down to verse 9 come after, come are sandwiched in between verses about false preaching in verse 6 and then again in verse 11. So verse 6 and verse 11 talking about the danger of false preaching, the danger of not listening to the reality of what God is saying.

[25 : 34] And in between these two verses we have verses 7 to verse 9 telling more about just how awful the society was and the situation was.

That's not a coincidence, again, Astrangus always says there's no mistakes or coincidences in the scripture, even Bob Ackroyd has the same thing as there's no filler in scripture, sounds much more cool in an American accent after a minute, but there's no filler in scripture.

Verses 7 to 9 are important because they remind us and they show us that where the gospel is not shared properly, where God's truth is not shared properly, society does not function well. And we see that in history, we know that in history, as a church becomes weaker or becomes quieter, society around about it begins to fall to bits. We see that in our own nation, we see that in our own country, in our own island. When the gospel is weakened, I don't mean the gospel is weak, but when the Christians are weaker or lower numbers, when Christians are perhaps not sharing the gospel as they ought to or not living lives as they ought to, the society begins to break down round about us.

That's a common theme all through its scripture. There's no worries, there's no problems, there's no destruction coming. And because there's no worries, no problems, no destruction coming, then we can live lives however we want, doing whatever we want, no problems. It's all good, it's all fine.

If we are hearing God's word and truly hearing the gospel, then our lives should reflect that. But the opposite is true. If we're not hearing God's word and not hearing the true gospel, then lives will begin to fall apart. So what is said to those who are caught up in this selfish and false preaching? We see that in verse 10. To those who are under us preaching verse 10, arise and go. For this is no place to rest because of uncleanness that destroys the grievous destruction. Don't spend another second here listening or hearing these false teachers get out, go. While there's still time, go and hear the gospel, listen to the truth.

[28 : 21] You're comfortable now listening to these folks who are telling you all these wonderful stories, wonderful lies, but leave now and go and hear the truth before it's too late.

You just hear and sense that the urgency in poor Micah's tone in verse 10. Arise and go. These are our two imperatives. We're not just some nice advice from Micah.

These are instructions. God is speaking through Micah and telling his people, get up, go, find the truth, listen to that. Stop listening to his rubbish and go and hear what God is truly saying.

As we share the gospel, as we in our daily Christian lives seek to share the gospel to a world, to a house, to a job, to a wherever we are, even to our villages, we must share the gospel boldly without fear. That should never mean we do it in a spirit that's unhealthy. We should share the gospel lovingly with care for our friends, care for our neighbours, care for our families, members, for those who don't have a gospel. Share it boldly, share it clearly, but share it carefully with love. The gospel is going to be offensive, but it's very nature.

Never be surprised when we share the gospel and we receive a reaction that just seems vicious. I'm sure many Christians here, and I know of some Christians here who've had that same reaction when they first heard the gospel, they reacted boldly to it, and that's a natural way. It's not what we want to hear. We don't want to hear there's a God we must answer to. We don't want to hear there's a king over us, but the truth is there is only one way to heaven. We must repent, and your life must be given over to Jesus. Listen to the advice of verse 10.

[30 : 45] Don't spend a second hearing anything else other than the truth of God in his word. So the people were materially selfish, they were selfish with their time, with their money.

They were selfish in terms of their spiritual lives, listening to feel good messages, but not listening to God's truth. So from these selfish lifestyles, from these selfish spiritual lives, we then have this odd, with respect, odd change of tone in verse 12.

If you look with me please to verse 12 and verse 13, we see something different happening here, something quite incredible. We've had the painful truth of a selfish lifestyle, that the painful reality of a selfish spiritual lifestyle, now the tone has changed completely.

I will surely assemble all of you, oh Jacob, I will gather the remnant of Israel, I will set them together like sheep in a fold. So on verse 13, he who opens the breach goes up before them, they break through and pass the gate to go out by it, their king passes on before them, the Lord at their head. Where is this come from? So much so that some of the early commentators were convinced that this verse was not part of the original text, they were saying it can't be part of it, it doesn't make sense. They tried to stick verses 12 and 13 as a word to the start of chapter three, before perhaps they got mixed up, we try to stick it to the end of chapter two, one guy tried to stick it to the start of chapter six. But the reality is the truth is, these verses are original and they belong right where they are, verses 12 and 13 were written at the end of chapter two. There's a wonderful, beautiful tenderness in these verses with read chapter one and chapter two and it's all looking bleak, it's all looking dark. And then at the end of chapter two we have this hopeful statement, it's almost a break, we can breathe for a second. Yes, all of this is awful, we have sinned in so many ways, but wait a second and listen to this.

You've sinned against me, you've done this awful wrong to me and to each other, but still I will surely assemble all of you. Oh Jacob, the tense being used here, it's a future tense, it's going to happen one day, it's a future absolute, it's going to happen and it will happen, but not quite yet. It's a definite future event, but not quite yet.

[34 : 06] This gathering of God's people, this future gathering is described, that we see halfway through verse 12, like a flock, God will gather together his people, the great shepherd will bring together all his loved ones. And finally here we catch this glimpse, this as a were look at to what's going on underneath all of this. On one level we have all the sin of his darkness, but yet working through and weaving through all this, here we catch a glimpse of God's perfect eternal plan of redemption. A glimpse of God's greater plan, God had not abandoned his people, God had not forgotten them. His plan for eternity was a plan that would care for them, a plan to provide for them, a plan to give them a king, one to lead them and one to go before them. Now some might say that these verses are talking about a future situation in terms of the history of the time, that in a hundred years or 200 years from this time this would happen, but nothing matches up to this description. Yes, eventually the people of Israel would of sorts recover from the destruction from the Syrian army, but not in such a way as these verses describe, or definitely not in such a way as the rest of Micah describes this coming future of hope verses 12 to 13 seem to be pointing forward to something far greater, something distant, something sure to take place, pointing forward to one, to this breaker, to a king who would win a greater victory than some battle, but a king who would win the greatest victory, one who would lead his people and lead them without fault, lead them perfectly. Verse 13, if you look with me please to verse 13, a strange description, a strange, strange, strange version, general, he who opens the breach goes up before them, he who opens the breach in Hebrew, this phrase he opens the breach is one word, it's almost, what's the title really, this title describes someone, he who opens the breach, this title, this person, quite simply, quite literally the breaker, the breaker, the breaker will go up before them, he will go before them and break apart all their enemies, break through and pass the gate, and then this breaker is described more fully, who is this breaker, the one who makes a way for his people, he's very king, incredible language of salvation here, not only has Jesus made a way for us to be saved, but Jesus as we know reigns and rules as king, the same person here being described in verse 13, the one who breaks through the enemy then reigns and rules as king, comma the Lord at their head, the breaker, the king, the Lord, one person

doing all this, all these titles describing one person who was to come and rescue his people, reality isn't touching us already, that this breaker of a one who would come and destroy his enemies, this is incredible news that Christians hear this evening, but one has come and he has destroyed his enemies, defeating death itself, our Savior Jesus the breaker has gone forward and torn to shreds any and all opposition that faced him, that's wonderful news for Christians, especially in light of chapter 1 and the rest of chapter 2 where we were reminded just how easy we fall to sin when reminded just how incredible our Savior is, but again we have to look at the other side if you're here this evening without Jesus as your Savior, this breaker is not working for you, he's working against you, you still stand against him as one of his enemies, we don't say this for fun, we don't say this to get a reaction, it's not easy to preach these things, it's not easy to hear these things, but it's in God's Word and the reality is like we said we are either behind our Savior as he goes forward and strength and leads us as king or we're in front of him fighting against him, the reality is that doesn't have to be the way it is this evening, the people in Micah's day did not listen to the warnings, they did not repent, the army came and destroyed a large, large number of these people, the reality of for us that the gospel of hope is for all who will hear it right now, as you sit here with breath in your lungs, as you sit here just now you are here, you've heard the gospel, every excuse you have for not coming to Jesus and worshipping him as king, that excuse is meaningless, it's important for you of course it is, and there's plenty of time after you come to

Jesus to work through the questions and work through the issues, there's not a single Christian here this evening who hasn't got a mind full of questions about Jesus, about scripture, about everything else, but come and know him first, come and stand behind this breaker as he defeats his enemies, come and be led by this king, so until you do so you are standing in front of him and you will not win that fight, he is the high king above all kings who reigns and rules all things, all things made through him, all things made by him, all things made for him, but he's also the one who has done all the work for you, don't waste any more time, don't waste it, our lives are short enough as they are, don't waste your time and come and trust in the Jesus, talk to the Christian you know about it, talk to the elders here, talk to myself,

I'm in the mants most of the day, most of the next five weeks, come and say hello, come and have a chat, don't waste this time, let's put our heads in a word of prayer, my Lord God we come before you and we acknowledge, we thank you for your word, even as we find again challenging passages in Michael, we thank you for it, we thank you that you are kind enough to show your people where we're going wrong, to show your people their sins, to show your people where they are going against you, Lord give us a wisdom to see yourself in the same place and to have a wisdom to be humble enough to come before you and to bring our sins to you or help us in our lives not to be selfish, in our money, in our time not to be selfish, help us in our spiritual lives to always seek after truth, never to seek after what just keep us happy but seek after what you are truly saying to us, but Lord we thank you, at this day and this evening we can come before you and give you praise, that the one your people waited for in these days that he has come and he has broken that darkness and he has made that way of salvation, that all may come and believe and trust in him, give us an understanding of that this evening and again for any here who as of yet don't worship you, Lord you would draw alongside them, you would tenderly and lovingly show them who you are or you would show them Bernie Duffy, but also show them the finished work of Jesus, that the blood shed for them, if only they would come and repent and believe.

This calleth things your precious namesake, amen. Let's conclude by singing to God's praise from Psalm 15, we are found by Tabernacle Lord Hushala Baigwafee and then by High and Holy Hill Hushala Gweller, join together at same depositories.

[46 : 36] God we are coming for you again and we thank you for the day we have had, the chance we have had today to worship you and to praise you, spend this day reading your word and thinking about you, we ask as we start this new week, we do so relying on you, we do so trusting in you, we do so praising you, glorifying you for all that you are and all that you have done, all that you continue to do for us, Lord humble us and keep us, and we again give your name all we praise that is due. Let's go and think in Christ's precious name, His precious name. Amen.