

Micah 3

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[0 : 00] Okay, do sit down and turn to Micah chapter 3. Micah chapter 3. And I want to preach it in a slightly different way than I'd normally preach it. I think you read chapter 3, it's pretty depressing. Pretty discouraging. Very often it's preached, this is what the leaders were like in Micah's day, this is what the leaders are like today, this is where the state we're in. But I don't think you need that tonight, I certainly don't.

And so I'm going to start with a quote from the Westminster Confession of Faith. You should have had this little sheet, which has the same thing on both sides. Yeah, you'll see that, alright, just to help you.

Alright, here we go. So, Westminster Confession of Faith, which is a summary of what we believe it's our doctrinal basis, let me read it to you. In his eternal purpose, it pleased God to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus Christ.

His only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man. Jesus is the prophet, priest and king, the head and saviour of his church, the heir of all things and the judge of the world.

[1 : 08] Judge of the world. From all eternity, God gave him, that's the Lord Jesus, a people to be his seed and to be in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified and glorified by him.

So, in eternity, God the Father appointed God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to this threefold office. And then as we read the Old Testament, we'll see that that threefold office, prophet, priest and king, unfolded and revealed.

So, Adam, do you remember him? He was the first man, wasn't he? He is prophet, priest and king. He's the only person in history to hold all three offices.

But we know, don't we, Adam failed. He failed in the garden. And Adam lost his God-given role and lost his calling. And so, after the fall, as you go through the Old Testament, no one person held all three offices.

There was a number of faithful saints that held some of them. So, Moses, he's a king of sorts, isn't he? As you read the story of Exodus, which you know, Moses did lots of kingly things.

[2 : 23] Lots of things a king would perform. But he functioned more as a prophet. He spoke God's words to Pharaoh. He was a mouthpiece for the people. Aaron, Moses' brother-in-law, well, he was a priest, wasn't he?

He was a priest for the people of God. He was the people's representative with God. He spoke to God on behalf of the people. And so he held the office of priests. King David.

He was chiefly a king, wasn't he? He ruled over Israel. But we also know David was a bit of a prophet, wasn't he? The Psalms. He spoke God's word, proclaimed it.

But there was no one person that was prophet, priest, and king until the Lord Jesus Christ. In Israel's history, you can see some faithful sketches of what this prophet and priest and king was to be like.

But in Micah chapter 3, as we read it, did you notice? The leaders, the family, the leaders of the families, the rulers, the elders who exercised God's rule, that kingly function, instead of pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, these rulers, these kings, were engrossed in the worst kind of selfishness.

[3 : 49] The rulers in Micah chapter 3, they engaged in the kind of abusing and feeding off the people. Instead of sacrificially loving the people, they abused them to serve their own wicked ends and schemes.

And so, what I want us to look at is really the prophet, priest, and kingly aspects of Micah chapter 3. And so, I'm starting to think of an illustration.

And the only illustration I can come up with, you can come up with a better one, is a photo negative. Do you remember photo negatives? You young people and you kids, you'll have to Google it. Maybe they can explain it.

But it used to be, you'd take a photo, and you'd have to wind it on, and then you would take the film out, and you would go to the chemist, and you would hand it over to the chemist, and about a week later, you would go back to the chemist, and they would hand you a packet of photos.

And in the, and that little packet, there would be all your photographs, but they'd also be negatives. And the negatives were like the opposite, weren't they? So you'd hold them up to the light, and you could see your photo, but everything was the wrong way around.

[5 : 03] It was like inverse. And so, if you had somebody with black hair, in the negative, it was white hair. And all the time, it's kind of the wrong way around.

And there was negatives. You'd get your pictures, but you'd get the inverse of the pictures. Light was dark, and dark was light. Light. And so when they developed those photographs from that little bit of film, you would get the positive of the negative.

Okay. If you're under 30, you don't understand that illustration, that's all right, okay? And if you're under 30, you're probably bored by it. Over 30. But what Micah 3 is, is it's the negative image of the person and work of Christ.

I don't know whether you picked it up, but when you read Micah 3, everything is evil. Everything you see is sinful. But what wonderfully happens is when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you see the opposite.

You see their sin, but you see his holiness. You see their lack of judgment, but you see his righteousness. You see their pride, but you see his humble submission.

[6 : 20] So first of all, kings. The kings. Remember last week, we saw the prophet's words of judgment. He spoke judgment, didn't he, Micah, so harshly to those who stole the possession of the land from his people.

They were greedy. They idolatrously pursued wealth at any cost. And Micah continues, but in verse 1 of chapter 3, can you see it? He speaks to the heads of Jacob, to the rulers of the house of Israel. And he's got them in his sights, in his crosshairs. He's dealing with Israel's leaders, Israel's kingly figures. And so what were Israel's leaders to be like?

Leaders in the people of God were to judge with equity. They were to be righteous and upright.

They were to be fair. And so in Exodus 18, you read about Moses' instruction to the people about how rulers were to conduct themselves.

You are a chosen race, one Peter tells us. A royal priesthood. Holy nation. A people for his possession.

[7 : 30] That's the fulfillment of what Israel's leaders were to be. They were meant to be upright. They were supposed to fear God and hate corruption and look negatively upon bribes.

But Micah condemned Israel's rulers because, verse 2, ultimately they abused their authority. Look at verse 2. You who hate the good and love the evil.

Can you see it? The rulers were acting, weren't they? In exactly the opposite way they were supposed to act. And the prophet describes them. I don't know whether he picked it up in the most gruesome of terms.

He essentially likens them to cannibals. Look at the second half of verse 2. You tear the skin from off my people. It's a horrible image, isn't it? And their flesh from off their bones. You eat the flesh of my people and you flay the skin from them.

That's metaphoric language, I think. But it's written in such a way that you notice the brutality and the wickedness of these rulers. In other words, what you have in chapter 2 is wicked developers stealing the land of the inheritance.

[8 : 39] Stealing their possessions. And so in chapter 2 the people are being badly treated. They're being ripped off. And so I suspect what you have is these people would go to their leaders. They'd go to court.

And they would say, this man has wickedly stolen my inheritance in the land. And rather than ruling in accordance with justice and fairness and truth, the wicked rulers would consume the people.

And they would find that when they went to court, they would find that the judges were in cahoots with the wicked land thieves. And they would take bribes. The kind of language, you give me a cut of the land and I will rule in your favor.

And so the leaders, rather than showing love and care for the people, instead of presenting them with a living reflection of the upright God, they became essentially the incarnation of evil. So think for example about King Ahab and Jezebel. Do you remember them? And when Ahab wanted to buy Amnaboth's vineyard, Amnaboth wouldn't sell it. Do you remember King Ahab? [9 : 47] He sulked. He became depressed and mourned. And Jezebel, his wife, comes to him and says, well, why is your face downcast? He tells her. She says, well, just leave it to me.

She takes things into her own hands. She has two wicked men accuse Naboth of blaspheming God. And because of this, Naboth is stoned to death because of these false allegations.

The narrative says in 1 Kings 2, verse 11, No, that's not the right verse.

That tells you, if you want to know what that is, that's about the death of David. That's not right. But what we find is that Jezebel, she contacted the leaders and she says, I want you to set up Naboth. I want you to get the men to lie so that he can be stoned to death and can be executed. I think that's exactly what's happening in Micah chapter 3. It's the exact kind of conduct that Micah is condemning.

[10 : 52] They conspired together, didn't they, Jezebel and the leaders to consume Naboth so they could steal his land. And so Israel's leaders would face God's judgment for their sin as Micah prophesies in verse 4.

God will carry them away into exile. He will not let them get away with it. He says, I mean, you will cry out to God but God will not hear you. But of course, this judgment against Israel's leaders and Israel's kings must ultimately cause us to look forward to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings.

Because as you think about it, rather than inflicting suffering on others, it was the Lord Jesus who was afflicted and suffered. so that we don't have to face God's judgment.

Think of this, it's a world of irony, isn't it, that Christ, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings suffered for us so that we do not have to suffer the curses of the law. When God has got every right to judge us alongside Israel's leaders, instead, he sends his only begotten son, Jesus, to suffer for us.

And here, these wicked leaders, do you see what it says? They were flaying the skin of the people of Israel.

[12 : 17] Perhaps, in some cases, literally so. People were unjustly suffering under the rule of these wicked leaders. But we know, don't we, it was the Lord Jesus who was flayed when the Roman authorities whipped him.

He was brutally beaten. A crown of thorns was thrust upon his head and they mocked him.

Compare him with these wicked leaders.

One 19th century preacher said, Christ took your cup of grief. Christ took your cup of grief, your cup of curse, and pressed it to his lips and drank it to its dregs.

And then he filled it with his sweet pardoning. Sympathizing love. And he gives it back to you so that you might drink it forever.

Christ drank the cup of the curse of God's wrath to its very dregs. That even though he was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What a world of difference.

[13 : 27] And I think what's important to know here is that Micah's judgment against the rulers, against the kings, if you will, ends with Christ.

And we could stop that. And if we did stop there, we would see a beautiful scene of Christ's suffering on your behalf. And yet one of the great truths of the Bible that has been recovered is this priesthood of all believers.

So stick with me here. The fact that we are united to Christ, we share in everything that Christ has. And so, thus, as Christ is prophet, priest, and king, so we who have been united to Christ by faith and have his indwelling presence within us, we too, as his people, we share in that threefold office.

That threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. And so that means all of us have, as Christians, have that responsibility to exercise that role, that office.

And so in the light of this wicked use of authority and Christ's wonderful use and loving use of his kingly authority, we have been united with Christ.

[14 : 57] We're joined to him. We share in his kingly office. We are kings in Christ. We're the royal family tonight.

And so do you see the authority that God has given us in our lives? In our positions of authority at work or the home or in church or within school?

And so do we take advantage of others? Do we turn a blind eye to sin? Or do we seek to show the curse-bearing love of Christ to others?

when the Lord Jesus tells us that when we're struck on the cheek, we're not to retaliate, but we're to turn the other cheek. And that is ultimately, isn't it, embodying the loving but also the suffering of Christ.

The love that Christ gives to others. And rather than seeking justice and wanting to strike that person and exact justice or maybe even vengeance, Christ's point is that we are willing to turn the other cheek and bear the penalty as he bore the penalty.

[16 : 23] I'm not saying we bear the penalty in exactly the same way Christ did. Christ bears the penalty of a broken law on our behalf as an atonement for sin. But in our case, we turn the other cheek. And when we bear the penalty, it's an expression of love as Christ our King has condescended to love us.

And so we absorb that pain. We absorb the penalty when we rightly bring it to bear against someone else when we turn the other cheek. When we show love to those who deserve to be punished.

When we show others the forgiveness that we ourselves have received from Christ. That is the loving nature of our King. That is the nature of our King's love for us. And so should we not extend the same love to others that we've received from Christ?

Or will we look like Israel's leaders who flayed the people, chopped them into bits, threw them into the pot so that they could take advantage of them? That brings us to our second point. prophets. In Israel, part of the duty of the prophets was to hold the kings in check.

As I think, for example, of the prophet Elijah, the prophet Elijah again and again, he goes to Ahab and Jezebel, he holds them accountable for their sin. So much so that Ahab and Jezebel, they hated him because he was continually calling them to account for their wickedness.

[17 : 54] And the prophets should have held the kings to account. They should have held the kings in check. But can you see what the prophets of Micah's day, instead of holding them in check, instead of bringing them to account, instead of bringing the law of God to bear on their ruling, do you see what they did?

They joined in the feeding frenzy. The prophets preach a false message and they say, there's peace so long as their mouths were filled. Do you see that in verse five? But if their mouths weren't filled, they would complain.

they would use their office against those who they were supposed to protect and love. And so for this, God will judge them.

Look at verse six. Therefore it should be night to you without vision and darkness to you without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets and the day shall be black over them.

The seers shall be disgraced and the diviners put to shame. And they shall all cover their lips. The tool of their trades for there is no answer from God. God essentially says, you want lies?

[19 : 00] You want to claim to speak in my name? Well, I've not given you this message, the message of falsehood. And so I'll cover you in darkness. I won't give you any revelations. I'm not going to give you any messages.

You'll cry out to me, but I will not respond. And I will put you into darkness. And once again, I think we can see, can't we, that the negative in the false prophets, in the Lord Jesus, we see the positive. The exact opposite. What was the Lord Jesus Christ? He was the truth incarnate. He always spoke the truth, no matter what the cost.

Christ. And I think we can see a positive picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 8. I love verse 8. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

God's sin. I cannot imagine the courage that it would have taken for Micah to speak against the status quo. To level his words of God's truth against the power.

[20 : 21] To speak truth to power is very, very, to speak truth to your friend is not enough, but to speak truth to power like this. To level his words of God's truth against the power that they held.

They held all of this power, and yet he speaks boldly to them. And I think we see, don't we, here, just a faint positive picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was himself willing to stand up to authority of his day, to speak the truth to them regardless of the consequences, even when it led him to death, to the crucifixion.

Do you see, the Father poured out his Spirit on Christ, for him to be able to carry out his prophetic ministry? And so, join with me in question 31.

Can you see the Heidelberg Catechism? It's another one of the summaries of our faith. And let me ask you the question, verse 31, you'll respond with the answer, why is he called Christ that is anointed?

So why is he called Christ that is anointed? Let's say it together. because he has been ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption, our only high priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body has redeemed us and who continually intercedes for us before the Father and our eternal King, who governs us by his word and spirit and who defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us.

[22 : 16] And so far from kind of aiding and abetting the cannibalistic frenzy of Israel's rulers, Jesus speaks and he continues to speak to us, truth as he feeds us from heaven.

In fact, the Bible says Jesus is the manna from heaven. The Bible tells us that he feeds us. That's what Jesus meant in the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

And so here, in Micah's day, the prophets are aiding and abetting the feeding upon the people. And in the Lord Jesus, he says, I will not feed upon you, I will feed you.

My word will be food to you and you will be satisfied. But remember, that is fulfilled in Christ. But as we looked at with the kingly office of Christ, how does this apply to us?

Given our union with Christ, how do we exercise our part in this prophetic office? Well, do we speak truth to those around us in love? If you're anything like me, you often cower from speaking the truth.

[23 : 31] Whether that's being too afraid of speaking the truth of the gospel to an unbeliever.

Perhaps when we hear things being said that ought not to be said, it's really easy, isn't it, to speak with a child and say, don't say that.

But when it's a friend, when it's a peer, we can often be terrified of speaking the truth. It's one of the things we need to drum into our children, isn't it?

So children, teenagers, just listen for a minute. Do not, do not, do not be a people pleaser. That's one of the things the Bible drums into you. All of us want to be liked, don't we?

Desperate to be liked. None of us wants to be a pariah to stick out. And yet, for every one of us, for your parents, for each one of us, it requires us to speak the truth.

To earn some of the disrespect of the people around us. Even if it means we lose a friend, to be willing to speak the truth. It's my great prayer for you as children, I mean young people, that you'll be willing to speak the truth.

[24 : 42] To earn that disrespect. Because that is part of the prophetic office we've been given. That we're willing to speak the truth to power.

Willing to suffer for the sake of the truth, for the sake of the gospel. You might say to me, those adults who are here, well I wouldn't want to risk losing my job, losing my income.

So we're quiet. And we're silent. Or we shade and darken the truth just like the devil in the garden of Eden. He shaded the truth to me.

And Satan did that in tempting Christ. Shaded the truth. And this office of being a prophet, do we speak words of truth and life to our spouses, to our friends?

When I get to heaven, I want to ask the apostle Paul about when he speaks in Galatians, about the church in Galatia biting one another so that they devour one another.

[25 : 46] I think he's got Micah 3 in his mind. I think he's pulling that language from Micah 3. And so it's terribly sad, isn't it?

In church life, we can devour one another. And it shouldn't be so. We speak the truth, but we do so in love and kindness and humility. And as we do that, we share in Christ's prophetic office.

Lastly, the priests. Micah returns and he brings more words of judgment against Israel's leader.

Look at verse 11. He rebukes them for their willingness to have bloodshed and to take bribes.

Verse 11. Its heads give judgment for a bribe. Its priests teach for a price. Its prophets practice divination for money.

Yet they lean on the Lord and say, it's not the Lord in the midst of us. No disaster shall come upon us. They're hired guns. They're mercenaries. Conference speakers.

[26 : 48] What do you need me to prophesy to you about? And I'll do so for a price. What do you need me to preach on? And I'll preach on it. You want to hear a comforting message of salvation even though you're wicked, even though you're crooked?

Well, for the right place, I can do it. I'll preach to you the message that you want me to hear. And rather than relying on the sacrifices for their income in accordance with the God's law, they were essentially saying, I'm going to take everything from you.

Think of Eli's sons regularly ripping off the people, so much so that they become obese. Instead of serving as the representatives of the people to bring sacrifice to God for their sins, they milk the people for profit.

And what is terribly sad is I think ultimately these people thought that their actions, it would only affect themselves. I'm just getting some money for myself, I'm just looking out for me, but what happened in Old Testament Israel is when the priests stop serving their God-given function, it means that the sacrifices aren't offered, which means that the sins of the people pile up, which means that God will eventually have to kick them out of the land into exile.

Their wickedness would boil over into the land and essentially be one of the chief reasons for their exile from the land. And once again, we see again, don't we, Jesus is the exact opposite.

[28 : 20] Look at that question 31 that you read out for me, just look how brilliant it is. Look what it says. He's been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption and our only high priest who by the one sacrifice of his body has redeemed us and continually intercedes for us before the Father.

He who was rich became poor for our sake. He stepped away from his throne and entered into this veil of tears and was obedient even to the point of death.

And so far from trying to milk you for financial gain, he laid aside everything that was rightly his so that you might rightly have everything that was his. And so who delivered up Judas to die, Spurgeon asks.

Not Judas for money, not Pilate for fear, not Jews for envy, but the triune God for love. And Christ laid down his life as priest out of love for you.

What manner of love is this, that we should be called children of God? When we were by nature children of wrath, Christ loved us. When we were his enemies, Christ died for us.

[29 : 44] So how do we, as those who are united to Christ in him, how do we exercise our priestly duties? Do we rest in the power of the gospel which enables us to pray and intercede for others as Christ intercedes for us?

I think all too often if I look at myself, I'm so concerned with my own needs, instead of looking to the needs of others. And we need to recognize, don't we, our priestly office gives us the privilege of interceding for others, and it's not a part-time job, it's not something that we're called to do from time to time.

No, Christ's priestly office is meant to characterize all our lives. It's not a part-time job to be a priest, it's a full-time calling.

So Romans 12 verse 1, I appeal to you brothers by the mercies of God, here's the priestly language, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Our priestly identity in Christ, our union with him should mark the entirety of our lives.

[31 : 06] Jesus describes your life as what? Take up your cross and follow me. And our lives throughout every element should be marked by a sacrificial love for others.

Christ. And so as I understand how the priests in Micah failed and how Christ wonderfully is the perfect priest and how I am a priest in Christ, I need to pray that the triune God would break the fortress of my heart.

And that I would lay down my selfishness. and I'd be willing to even lay down those things which I have a legitimate right. And that I and we as a church family would be enabled to pour out our lives as a drink offering, all for his glory and the benefit and love of our neighbours and our families. For the benefit and blessing of our church members. I hope that as you read Micah chapter three, maybe before you go to bed or maybe as you get up tomorrow morning, and as you reflect on Micah's harsh words of judgment, I hope that you will be able to see against the wicked backdrop of sin and darkness how brilliant and how beautifully the person and work of Christ shine.

And that this week you would meditate on Christ's faithful work as your true prophet and your true priest and your true king and you would give thanks for his work on your behalf. That you'd give thanks for him as a faithful prophet who has always spoken the truth to us.

[32 : 46] That truth which has brought us salvation and you'd give thanks to him as a loving priest that he has laid down his life as a sacrifice so that you would not have to suffer the curse of God's law. And that you would give thanks to him as a king who laid down his rule to rule in humility.

To give us a rule that we don't deserve. But I also hope that you will pray this week that Christ's threefold work would sink deep down into the depths of your heart.

That God would rain his spirit down upon this truth and it would produce great fruit in your lives. And so I want to close with the words of Heidelberg Catechism chapter 30, question 32.

It's a beautiful question on, that follows Christ's threefold work. And it asks this question, it asks the question, why are you called a Christian? And you need to understand that the word Christian doesn't just mean a follower of Christ.

That's how we often say, isn't it? What is a Christian? It's somebody who follows Christ. But what does Christ mean? It means anointed one. And so would you respond with the answer, why are you called a Christian?

[33 : 59] Because I am a member of Christ by faith and thus share in his anointing so that I may as a prophet confess his name, as a priest present myself, a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him and as king fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life.

And hereafter reign with him eternally of all creatures. Let's pray. Amen. Amen.