

UNABANDONED

A Study in the Book of Micah

Week 6: Judgment Deserved!

Introduction:

As we turn in the book of Micah to Chapter 6, the scene is set for a grand courtroom drama in which Israel stands accused of the offences they have committed against God. As we have seen throughout our study of Micah, we have a great deal in common with the people of Israel in Micah's day, following the same paths of rebellion and sin as they did. So as we read Micah 6, we can imagine ourselves in the dock alongside the Israelites, facing our own well-deserved judgment.

One of the 'crimes' of the Israelites (of which we too are guilty) was that they took God's goodness and faithfulness for granted, treating it in a 'throw away' manner as if it were worthless. Today we will explore why God will call us to account for this offence, and how we should – and should not – respond to the charge against us.

This week's Text: Micah 6

Sermon Points To Discuss:

1. God will call us to account if we take his goodness and faithfulness for granted

The people of Israel had rejected the righteous way of life that God had taught them, and in so doing they had rejected God himself. Instead of remembering and treasuring all the great things God had done for them, the saving acts that showed how good and loving a Father he was, and instead of responding with covenant-honouring, loving obedience, they discarded God and his ways, and preferred to choose their own lifestyle. The result was a society riddled with greed, injustice and oppression.

We know that God's anger is rightly roused by our rebellion, but in Micah 6:3-5 we see yet another result: the broken-heartedness of the Father. Today we live in the knowledge that God has shown us, in the most powerful way possible, that he loves us and is for us – the cross. It grieves him bitterly when, in light of Christ's sacrifice, we continue to doubt his goodness, and to choose rebellion over relationship with him.

2. How not to respond to God's judgment

Micah 6:6-7 describes, by means of irony and rhetorical questions, how we are *not* to respond to our deserved judgment – by pretend religiosity (v.6), ridiculous generosity, and insincere piety (v.7). These are the means by which we mistakenly think we can get back into God's 'good books' by our own efforts.

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3. How to respond to God's judgment

So if God does not want displays of religious piety and generosity from us, what does he want? Micah 6:8 tells us that what the Lord requires of us is 'to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God.' There is no amount of works-based, outward display or effort that can accomplish this in our lives, but only surrender, repentance and hearts changed by God!

4. What does it look like to give God our hearts and lives?

It is only when we have given our hearts and lives over to God that our behaviour can truly change in a way that is pleasing to him. Something that is common to all of our lives is the need to make a livelihood, and this is an area where greed, deception and injustice can not only creep in, but also be tolerated and justified, to a certain degree, by society. Micah 6:10-12 talks about unjust means of making money that are as familiar to us today as they were to the Israelites. They form an example of worldly, sinful practices that we need to resist if, out of changed hearts, we are to live in the just, merciful, humble way that God requires.

Discussion Questions

- Why did Israel's rejection of God's standards for life amount to a rejection of God himself?
- Which words in v3-5 reveal God's broken-heartedness over Israel's treatment of him? Why do you think God feels this way? And how do these verses impact the way you feel about God?
- Why does God expect the Israelites to rely on events which occurred centuries ago in how they relate to him?
- How do you tend to measure God's faithfulness in your life? How does it help to know that it is by the cross that we can know that we are un-abandoned?
- Are there any things that you tend to do when you want to 'get on God's good side' or persuade him to favour you with an answered prayer?
- Why is verse 7 so outrageous an example of insincere piety?
- Refer to verse 8. Why are we unable to do what God requires, without giving ourselves over to God?
- What is God's purpose in warning us of the judgment we deserve?
- What unfair ways of making money does God decry in v.10-12?
- Personal Reflection Question: We all need to make a living, but are we doing so in a way that honours God? Spend some time thinking through the ways in which you make an income, and ask yourself whether they are entirely just, merciful and full of humility before God.