

The God Who Delights in Mercy

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By: Pastor Greg Hocson

Text: [Micah 7:18-20](#)

The Book of Micah is a short book, only seven chapters, written by the prophet Micah. It may be a short book but it's full of instruction for us. Micah is considered one of the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and his prophecies were directed chiefly toward Jerusalem. His message alternates back and forth between warnings of judgment and promises of deliverance.

I believe the message of this book is that, in the midst of darkest hour there is always hope. In the midst of judgment there is mercy. Micah never doubted the mercy of God. And here in our text ... [Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.](#)

The prophet in the midst of judgment, still breaks out and celebrates the uniqueness of God - Who is a God like unto thee? This, by the way, is what Micah's name means "**who is like Yahweh?**", "**who is like God?**" There is none like our God!

Micah sees ahead the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem because of their rebellion and sin, but he also sees God and how that God delights in mercy.

This morning, let us behold our God in His mercy. The God revealed in the Bible is a God who delights in mercy. And how do I know God is merciful? I have three answers prepared this morning - we know God is delights in mercy because **He declares** it, **He demonstrates** it and **He desires** it.

I - He Declares It

Who declares it?

1. The Biblical writers declare it

God declares His mercy through the prophets and apostles. By the direct inspiration of God and by their own personal experience, these prophets and apostles declare that God is a God of mercy.

It is the great design of the Scripture Old and New Testament, to represent God as merciful.

Lamentations 3:31 For the LORD will not cast off for ever: 32: But though he cause grief, **yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies**. 33: For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

God does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

Psalms 86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and **ready to forgive**; and **plenteous in mercy** unto all them that call upon thee.

The God of the Bible is the "Father of mercies".

2 Corinthians 1:2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3: Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies**, and the God of all comfort; 4: Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The Father of mercies, that is, He is the **SOURCE** of all mercies. He is the **Author**, and the **Giver**, and both in a temporal, and spiritual sense.

We have abundant reason to be thankful to God, and bless Him for, being altogether unworthy and undeserving of them.

Our text plainly declares

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because **he delighteth in mercy**. 19: He will turn again, **he will have compassion upon us**; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

God is more inclined to mercy, than wrath. Mercy pleases Him. You will **never** read in the Scriptures, "God delights in wrath and judgment."

Psalms 145:8 **The Lord** is gracious, and full of compassion; **slow to anger**, and **of great mercy**.

2. God Himself declares it

Exodus 34:5 **And the LORD** descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and **proclaimed the name of the LORD**. 6: And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, **The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious**, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7: Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. 8: And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

Jeremiah 3:12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for **I am merciful**, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

II - He Demonstrates It

The greatest demonstration of His mercy is in how He looks at us in our sins and in the way He forgives our sins.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19: He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

The uniqueness of God consists in the His delight in mercy and the way He manifest His mercy. Micah focuses on one of the ways God manifests His mercy and that is, in the way He deals with the sins of His people.

1. He pardons iniquity

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, **that pardoneth iniquity**, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

The first manifestation of this mercy is contained in the words, "That pardoneth iniquity." The greatest manifestation of God's mercy is in the way He forgives.

This is good news to sinners who are painfully aware of their sins. God in His mercy is willing and ready and able to forgive sins.

He does not forgive reluctantly. He delights to show mercy.

Psalm 86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and **ready to forgive**; and **plenteous in mercy** unto all them that call upon thee.

If a person is not forgiven, it is not because God would not forgive and forgiveness is not available. No, it is because we are slow to ask for forgiveness, we are too proud to ask forgiveness.

2. He passes over our transgression

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and **passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage**? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

God voluntarily passes over the transgression of His people. As God, on the night of the Exodus, passed over the Israelites and destroyed them not, He passes over His people, spares them, imputing not their iniquities unto them.

God voluntarily passes over the transgression of His people. **This doesn't mean that God tolerates sin.** He passes our transgressions, **not because** He does not see it, not that He does not hate it, not that He is indifferent to it, but He passes over it, because He delights in mercy.

He can exercise mercy on us because of Jesus Christ and the blood He shed on the night He crucified on the cross. As God, on the night of the Exodus, when He saw the blood, He passed over the Israelites and destroyed them not, so He passes over His people, spares them, imputing not their iniquities unto them for Jesus Christ's sake, having regard to the precious blood He shed on Calvary.

3. He retains not His anger

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? **he retaineth not his anger for ever**, because he delighteth in mercy.

God gets angry. He is angry, and justly angry with the sins of His people. He hates sin with an absolute and pure hatred. He hates sin because **He is holy** and **He is love**. God hates your sin and my sin because it dishonors Him and it hurts and destroys us.

But God does not retain His anger forever. You may have fallen and have backslidden, and have provoked God's anger and displeasure against you, but when you truly repent and turn to Him, He forgives and passes by your sins, and lets go His anger, and exercise mercy instead.

Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, **thine anger is turned away**, and thou comfortedst me. 2: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

And again, this, He does because all the anger of God due to our sins was poured on the Person of Jesus as He took our place, hanging upon the cross as a bleeding sacrifice, putting away sin by the offering of Himself.

4. He turns to us again

Micah 7:19 **He will turn again**, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20: Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

When we sin and backslide God for a short time may hide His face from us. He may withdraw His presence and leave us for a time to show that He is displeased with our sins and backsliding. The momentary hiding of His face when we sin is the mercy of God, that we may reap and feel the consequence of our sin against Him. Having missed His presence, which is very precious to those who have tasted His goodness, we repent and return to Him. If we return to Him in repentance and He will turn to us again.

5. He has compassion on us

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, **he will have compassion upon us**; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Compassion means to suffer with. His compassion moves Him to do something about our miserable condition.

Like the Samaritan man had compassion upon the man who fell among thieves, so He has compassion in His heart to those in helpless and hopeless state, who feel it, mourn over it, and confess it.

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Psalms 103:13 As a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14: for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Why does He pity us so much? Because He knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust.

6. He subdues our iniquities

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; **he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.**

To **subdue** - to tread under foot, to conquer, to overcome. Whenever God forgives sin, He subdues sin. He will conquer and overcome the sin of His people.

The Scripture is very clear ...

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: (why?) for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The same grace which delivers from the guilt and penalty of sin also delivers from the power and dominion of sin.

God does not forgive our sins without subduing sin in our lives. Because a forgiveness without subduing sin does not bring comfort and does not glorify God.

O, to be forgiven is a great blessing, but to have our sins subdued is a greater blessing.

7. He casts all our sins away

Micah 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and **thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.**

Casting sins "into the depths of the sea." "Remembering sin no more." All true forgiveness involves forgetfulness.

Psalms 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9: He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever. 10: He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11: For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12: As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

What a description of the way God removes the iniquities of those who fear Him. He casts them into the depths of the sea, so that they may be hidden forever from the sight of His eyes as a just, pure, and holy God, and be forever lost and buried in the depths of an unfathomable ocean.

The "the depths of the sea," the deepest place that can be found in the sea; so that sins cast into the depths of the sea are absolutely buried to be recovered no more and to be remembered no more.

And understand who cast our sins in the depths of the sea? **They have been cast there by God Himself**, and what He has cast out by His hand, His hand will never bring back.

If you and I had taken our sins and cast them into the sea, they would have been found again. It is like a murderer who tries to hide the dead body of his victim by casting it into the sea. But after a day or two the dead body will float to testify against the murderer.

Not so with God, when He cast out our sins into the depths of the sea, they will NEVER float again. They are forever buried in the depths of the sea of forgiveness to be recovered and remembered no more.

I believe **the sea** here has reference to **the fountain filled with blood of Christ** which cleanses us from all sins, which has washed away all iniquity, purged all transgression, cast all the sins of God's heritage behind His back, and drowned them in a sea unfathomable of grace, mercy, and love.

Satan may try to bring them up again and again, but if it is washed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

III - He Desires It

Because God is a merciful God, He expects and desires His children to be merciful.

[Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?](#)

As God loves mercy and delights in showing it, and we delight in receiving it, we are to love mercy and exercise mercy.

[Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.](#)

[The prophet Hosea informs us that God desires mercy, even more than He desires sacrifice.](#)

When Jesus delivered His Sermon on the Mount, He summarized the Biblical teaching in these simple words ...

[Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.](#)

In another place, the Lord gives us a simple command to be merciful ...

[Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.](#)

Having tasted of that wonderful mercy of God in Jesus Christ, we have a calling to be merciful.

Mercy is so important that God instructs us to bind it around our necks and write it upon the tablet of our hearts.

Proverbs 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: 4: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

How do we show mercy?

1. Show compassion to those who are in need

We are to show mercy towards others, especially towards those who are in need. Visit the sick, pray for those who are hurting, weep with those who weep.

2. Seek the salvation of others

Declare the mercy of God to others. God's mercy is a strong magnet to draw sinners to Him.

3. Forgive those who trespass against you

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Forgiveness is mercy exercised. Forgiving others liberates you and the person who wronged you.

Proverb 11:17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

The 18th Century poet Alexander Pope famous quote ...

To err is human to forgive is divine.

He explains while anyone can make a mistake, we should aspire to do as God does, that is, show mercy and forgive others.

IV - Closing Thoughts

We have been reminded today that the God we worship is a God who delights in mercy. See His mercy in pardoning iniquity. It is a full pardon. It is a free pardon. But understand to whom the Lord shows mercy.

Micah 7:18 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of **the remnant of his heritage?** he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

We all need mercy and forgiveness, but multitudes die without having received forgiveness. Men like to hear of forgiveness, but they do not like the way in which God offers to bestow it on them. Those whom the Lord pardons are also called "His heritage," His inheritance, His portion. The term is frequently applied to Israel, but it is applicable, in a stricter sense, to all His children, the heritage of the Lord.

Psalm 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9: He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever. 10: He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11: For as the heavens are high above the earth, **so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.** 12: As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13: As a father pitieth his children, **so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.**

The mercy of the Lord is upon those who have a reverential fear of God. Mercy is not for those who sin and fear not—but for those who fear and confess their sins. The promise of mercy and forgiveness do not apply to the careless, thoughtless, and indifferent, but for those who are painfully aware of their sins and ask for forgiveness.

Jesus Christ Confirms God's Merciful Nature

I close with this reminder and invitation. Jesus Christ came into the world to confirm that God is just but also to confirm that God is merciful and ready to forgive.

Do you need forgiveness?

Turn from your sin this morning, trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, and you will find a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea. Repent and believe the Gospel and you shall receive forgiveness and salvation, full and free!

AMEN!