

# What God Wanted for Christmas

Micah 6: 6-8; 7: 18-20

# Preparing for Advent

- Repentance and faith
- Change in attitudes and actions (change in priorities and lifestyle)

# **“Fruit” of such repentance and faith**

- Restored relationship with God and with others, even our enemies
- Humble reliance on God’s mercy and grace, leading to contentment
- Results in generosity and living honestly
- Able to resist temptation to exploit others for material gain

# Finding & giving a good gift ...

- Easy?
- Hard?
- Can be quite complicated

# Imagine this ...

- If you have the opportunity to present a gift to Jesus on his birthday, what would it be?

# **Gift Giving: highly significant form of communication**

- Very symbolic
- Gifts tell us about the giver, the receiver, and their relationship

**What do you give to someone  
who has everything?**

# The prophet

- Micah is shortened form of Michaiah, (*Mi-cha-yah*) "Who is like YHWH?" or "Who is like the LORD?"
- *Mi-cha-el* = Who is like \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- Character Profile: blunt, direct, plain-spoken, no nonsense kind of prophet
- Prophet of the oppressed and vulnerable
- Uses poetry and puns



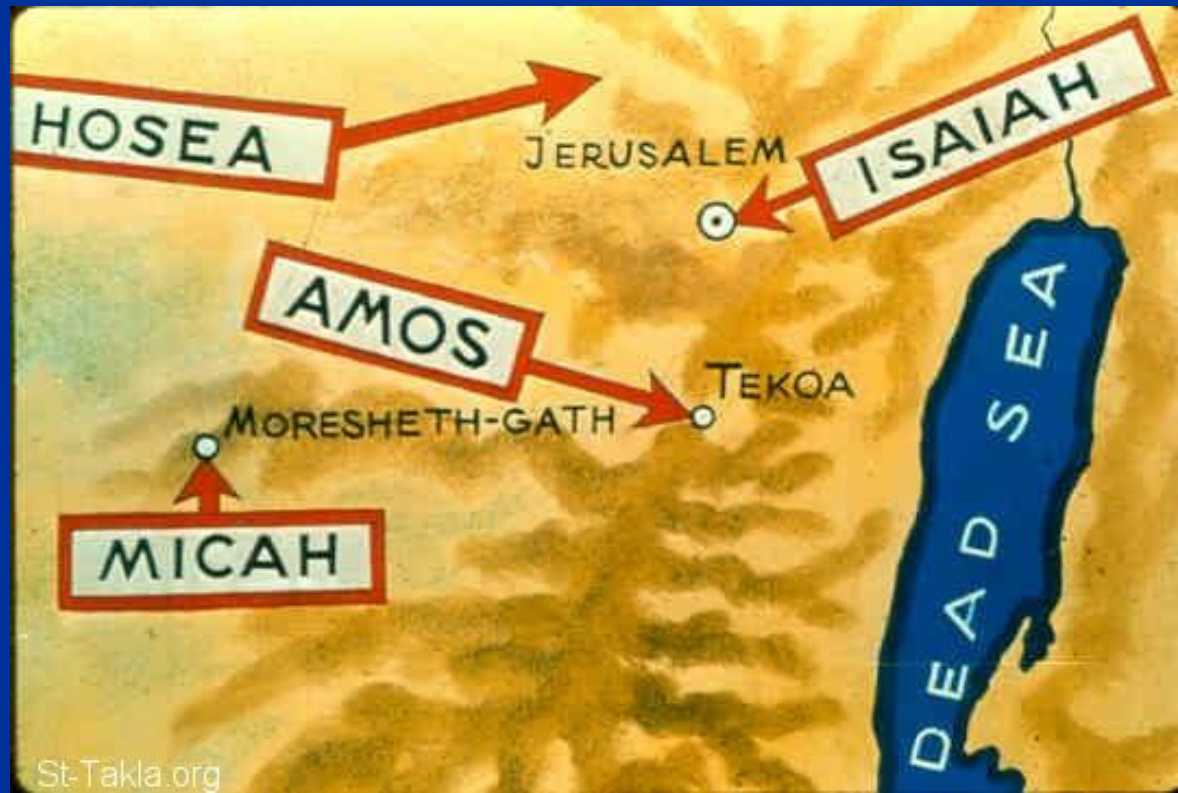
# The “big” picture

- Micah: brought God’s message to Israel’s southern and northern kingdoms ~ 735 to 710 BC
- Time period described in 2 Kings 15-20 & 2 Chronicles 26-30

The word of the Lord that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (Micah 1:1)

# Micah's contemporaries

- Isaiah: 740 to 681 BC
- Hosea: 755 to 715 BC
- Micah: ~ 735 to 710 BC



# Micah's Time



# International Tension



## Assyrian Empire

in Isaiah's Time (745-701 BC)  
under Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib

# Large-scale corruption at home

Woe to those who plan iniquity,  
to those who plot evil on their beds!

At morning's light they carry it out  
because it is in their power to do it.

2 They covet fields and seize them,  
and houses, and take them.

They defraud people of their homes,  
they rob them of their inheritance. (Micah 2: 1-2)

# God rebuked the leaders through Micah

“Listen, you leaders of Jacob,  
you rulers of Israel.

Should you not embrace justice,

2 you who hate good and love evil;

who tear the skin from my people

and the flesh from their bones;

3 who eat my people’s flesh,

strip off their skin

and break their bones in pieces;

who chop them up like meat for the pan,

like flesh for the pot?” (Micah 3: 1-3)

## ... the dishonest merchants

10 “What shall I say about the homes of the wicked

filled with treasures gained by cheating?

What about the disgusting practice

of measuring out grain with dishonest measures?

11 How can I tolerate your merchants

who use dishonest scales and weights?

12 The rich among you have become wealthy through extortion and violence.

Your citizens are so used to lying

that their tongues can no longer tell the truth.”

(Micah 6: 10-12: NLT)

## ... and the false prophets

5 This is what the Lord says:

“You false prophets are leading my people astray!

You promise peace for those who give you food,  
but you declare war on those who refuse to  
feed you.

6 Now the night will close around you,  
cutting off all your visions.



## ... false prophets (cont'd)

Darkness will cover you,  
putting an end to your predictions.

The sun will set for you prophets,  
and your day will come to an end.

7 Then you seers will be put to shame,  
and you fortune-tellers will be disgraced.

And you will cover your faces  
because there is no answer from God.”

(Micah 3: 5-7; NLT)

# **In contrast, Micah spoke God's message truthfully**

“But as for me, I am filled with power—  
with the Spirit of the Lord.

I am filled with justice and strength  
to boldly declare Israel's sin and rebellion.”

(Micah 3: 8; NLT)

# Micah prophecy came true

- “Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.” (Micah 1: 6)
- In 722 BC, Assyrian army destroyed Samaria and deported the people

# Micah prophecy came true

- “Writhe in agony, Daughter Zion,  
like a woman in labor,  
for now you must leave the city  
to camp in the open field.  
You will go to Babylon;  
there you will be rescued.  
There the Lord will redeem you  
out of the hand of your enemies. (Micah 4: 10)
- In 586 BC, Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem;  
the people were exiled; they returned ~536 BC

# 722 BC: Sargon II sacked Samaria



# Micah's days quite similar to ours

- A dark & tense world facing huge problems
- He spoke out against the sin and hypocrisy rampant among God's people
- He warned them of judgment that's coming
- Called God's people to repentance

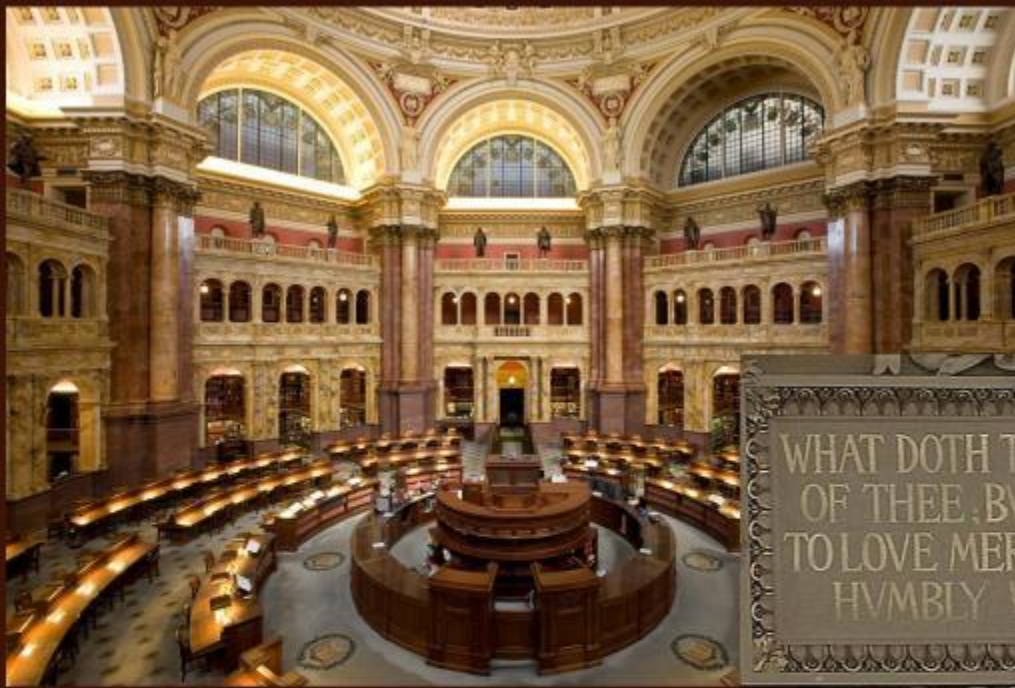
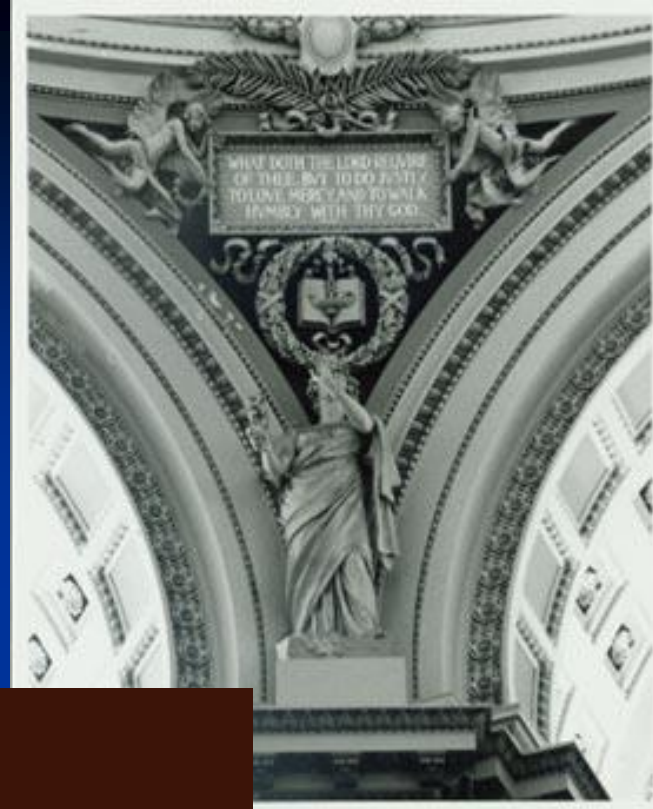
# **We must heed Micah's message**

- Our world is tense & dark, facing huge problems
- Sin & hypocrisy rampant among God's people
- He warns us of judgment that's coming
- He calls God's people to repentance

# Courtroom Scene in chapter 6

- Micah 6: 6-8 will answer: What God wanted for Christmas
- What God wants from His people all the time





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WHAT DOETH THE LORD REQVIRE  
OF THEE .BVT TO DO JSTLY.  
TO LOVE MERCY.AND TO WALK  
HVMBLY WITH THY GOD.

# Wrong answers (vv. 6 and 7)

- Quality of our gift/sacrifice? (v. 6)

With what shall I come before the Lord  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

- Quantity of our gift/sacrifice? (v. 7a)

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

- Hyperbole; exaggerations

# Wrong answers (vv. 6 and 7)

- The “ultimate” sacrifice ? (v. 7b)

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

# Micah 6 in original context

- God's people playing "Let's Make a Deal" religion
- They wanted to make a deal with God ... but God wanted their hearts, not their sacrifices

# Offering a sacrifice/Giving a gift reveals ...

- how we see ourselves
- how we see the recipient
- the relationship between giver and recipient

# Micah 6 in our context

- God is pleased when we offer gifts to Him
- God is pleased when we offer ourselves to Him
- We can be very “religious” and yet our hearts far away from God
  
- God’s people wanted to make a deal with God ... but God wanted their hearts, not their sacrifices

## Right Answer (v. 8)

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly [or prudently] with your God.

(NIV)

He has told you, O man, what is good;

and what does the Lord require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness, [or steadfast love]

and to walk humbly with your God?

(ESV)

# What God wants from His people

- Do justice (act justly)
- Treating people right because we know God
- Love kindness (love mercy)
- *hesed*: the unchangeable, unbreakable love God has for His covenant people
- Can't love kindness without loving people
- Walk humbly with God
- Opposite of walking proudly or self-righteously



# A few questions of the heart

- Why “do justice” and “love kindness” instead of “love justice” and “do kindness”?
- Much easier to “love justice” than to “do justice”
- Which is easier – rant against injustice or take meaningful action to stop it?
- Doing justice usually requires us to love a vulnerable or oppressed person in a way that will cost us something personally

# Questions of the heart

- “Do kind things” is relatively easier; also measurable
- To “love kindness” demands a lot more from us ... can’t love kindness without loving people
- Can’t love kindness and love selfishness at the same time

# Questions of the heart

- “walk humbly with God” starts with repentance
- Following Jesus Christ is all about pilgrimage, not perfection
- We will surely fail and revert to being selfish
- God the Holy Spirit exposes our sin so that we can repent
- When we repent of our sin, we are learning to walk humbly with our God

18 Who is a God like you,  
who pardons sin and forgives the transgression  
of the remnant of his inheritance?

You do not stay angry forever  
but delight to show mercy.

19 You will again have compassion on us;  
you will tread our sins underfoot  
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

20 You will be faithful to Jacob,  
and show love to Abraham,  
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors  
in days long ago.

(Micah 7: 18-20)

