

Perhaps the most well known verses in Micah are especially significant for this Advent and Christmas season. It is the prophet Micah, preaching in the southern kingdom of ancient Judah around 720 BC who tells us where Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah of God will be born seven centuries later. He says,

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace. “

It is these verses that sent the wise men from Herod to Bethlehem on their journey to find the One who was born “king of the Jews.” It is these verses that sent Herod’s misguided minions on a killing spree, determined to exterminate the divine king before He could reach maturity and take the throne. It is these verses that give us pause, call us to realize that God ordained the coming of Christ, and all the details of His life, long before the world began, and told of His plan before a single event came to be.

These verses beckon us to consider carefully what God has to say to us, for even when what He reveals takes time to be fulfilled, it will most certainly come to pass, just as He declares. God neither lies, nor misleads, nor deceives. He does not say one thing and do another. What He says, He does. What He determines, He actualizes.

The strength and power of these prophetic verses demand that we take to heart any instruction that might accompany this revelation. Within the prophecy of Micah there is another verse we ought to pay close attention to. Since we know that God acted with integrity and fulfilled in Christ the prophetic word given by Micah, when God tells us how we ought to respond to Him, we have every reason to listen carefully and act diligently. God is not kidding. He means what He says.

We might ask of this promise keeping, prophecy fulfilling sovereign God, “What would you have us do with our lives?” That’s what Micah is led to ask in chapter 6. He asks, “With what shall I come before the LORD and bow myself before God on high?” Does God want burnt offerings? Does God want thousands of rams offered on the altar and ten thousand rivers of oil poured out in worship? Does God want my firstborn? Will that satisfy God and move Him to forgive my sin?

The answer to the question, “What does God want of me?” is simple.

He has told you, O man, what is good: and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

All you have to do, God says, it to think like Me, love like Me, and spend your life setting your self aside and becoming like Me. Simple, right? Simply impossible! Who can do this? If our best

attempt at genuine righteousness is as Isaiah affirms, filthy rags, then who can adequately do justice the way God does, love the way God does, and set himself aside to be like God the way God is?

We already know the answer from the earlier verses. Who can do what is good and what the LORD requires? The One to be born in Bethlehem can.

He shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.

He shall be their peace! Not only their peace with one another, but more specifically, their peace with God. He will be the one who can fulfill the requirement of God. He will be the one who can do justice to the quality of God's glory, love mercy to the extent of God's heart, and set himself aside to the infinite fulfillment of God's eternal plan of salvation.

The manger, the Garden, the beating, the cross, the death, the grave, the resurrection - this is the gospel story of the One born in Bethlehem who fulfills the divine requirements of our sovereign and holy God on our behalf. And we meet those requirements ourselves when we put our trust in Christ, who did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

You cannot make a sacrifice big enough, pure enough, costly enough to cover your own sin, let alone the sin of the whole world. You cannot make an offering for yourself that will bring you into peace with God. You cannot do enough justice justly enough, you cannot love mercy mercifully enough, you cannot humble yourself to the will of God humbly enough. But the one born in Bethlehem, God come in human flesh, He is enough.

In this season, lay down your burden of trying to be enough, and take up Christ, the One who is God, the One who is enough. Put your faith and trust in Him and let Him lead to justice, mercy, and humility.

Until next time, there's something to think about.