

Voices: Not-So-Minor Prophets: Micah

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How we look at life matters more than what we see. Two people can look at the same situation and come away with different insights and perspectives, or cause and reality. This is not only true in life but in the way we read the Bible.

It has been stated, and I concur, “Where you stand influences what you see.”

Here, we look at the life of the prophet Micah from the “underside” of the narrative—or from the bottom up.

Most people try to look at life from an aerial view, the view from 35,000 feet. Aerial views are necessary when one wants to discern the broader scope and perspective of a location. Aerial views provide great insight on topography, local resources, and trends for growth and development.

Yet, the most essential view is not always from above. Rather, one must learn to develop an additional lens from below. This is more of a solid-ground view.

The view from below allows you actually to touch the soil beneath your feet. You can test the soil and discern from the water source the viability of the given space. What looks one way from above actually may be different and unique on the ground.

The developing Christian must discern both views to engage adequately the given space. This is true of the prophet Micah.

Micah was a country preacher. He was a “man of the soil,” so to speak.

Whereas Isaiah was a man on the inside or of substance, Micah came reluctantly to the role of ambassador for God. He had to learn “insider” language while all the while being true to God. This is no easy task.

Many times, when you are called upon for a role you compare yourself to those who have gone before you. You consider their words and imagery.

Micah had to learn to develop his own voice, ideas and images of what matters most in the mind of God. Micah had to discern the core or raw materials of God’s life and re-present them in the aerial setting as true to the topography and setting.

From the inside out

The Lord is coming forth “out of his place” (Micah 1:1) because of the transgressions of Jacob and the sins of Israel.

This is the opening scene of the narrative: God has an issue with his people. Their transgression is incurable. Therefore, discipline is the only form of healing.

Micah recounted Israel’s prophets saying: “Do not prophecy [disgrace.] Disgrace will not overtake us” (Micah 2:6).

The people insulated themselves against the very word that could deliver them, instead creating an alternate narrative.

Micah addressed the heads of Israel and the rulers of Jacob: “Is it not for you to know justice” (Micah 3:1-2)?

He described the leaders as cannibals (3:2-3) and declared the “lying” prophets shall walk in darkness (3:6), not in light, and they shall be put to shame (3:7). By contrast, Micah would have light and power (3:8).

Micah 6 picks up with the first chapter. God renewed his “case” against his people. He had explored the realities contextually framed his discontent with Israel. Now, he is ready to plead his case from ground level: I have seen. I have abhorred. I will act.

This is the lynchpin of the entire narrative. God makes his final arguments regarding the justification for his actions against his people. He made clear the reality that true justice does not begin with judgment of the nations, but with discipline of his people.

He makes clear what matters most in all of our lives is not that we bring more of the same, but we “learn” to be different. This is the gift and reality of the view from below versus the view from above.

From the bottom up

God’s covenant love longs for a community that is faithful, loyal and knowledgeable of his love, and is willing to experience and share that love with others.

Like Israel, we fail God by practicing religious habits without correct form—faithfulness—or engaging in social conversations without adequate fruit—knowledge. We also must change and become loyal. We also must hear the conciliatory appeal of the prophet to remember the nature of God (Micah 7:18-20).

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