

Sunday October 11, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome

As we begin our service of worship this morning let's remind ourselves of the great God we are coming before. So I am going to start off with a reading from Psalm 46. *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."* (NIV)

Prayer God our Refuge, when human resources fail, you alone remain our sure hope and defence. In the knowledge of your love, grant us courage. We place ourselves in your hands, confident that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for Jesus, the Living One, the First and the Last, who was dead, but now is forever alive. Help us, who have not seen, to believe; send us, as you have sent Jesus, to greet the world with the Easter word of peace and to share with all the Spirit's new life of forgiveness. We ask through the Lord Jesus, our Passover and our Peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Song – Almighty Maker <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ytCHkA-V3Y>

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|---|--|
| 1. Who but the Lord set the bound'ries of light | 2. Who but the Lord could have dreamed of the plan |
| Hung the stars in the night? | That would save fallen man? |
| Who but the Lord drew the face on the moon | Who but the Lord washes rebels with blood |
| Made the planets to move? | Making mercy a flood? |
| Who but the Lord tells the clouds | Who but the Lord could give life through a cross |
| when to pour, thunder to roar? | Rescuing us? |
| Amazing are Your works | Amazing are Your works |

Chorus

Chorus

*Almighty Maker
You command heaven and earth
By the power of Your Word
Be praised forever
Almighty Maker
All creation sings of You
Glory fills all that You do
Be praised forever, ever, evermore*

Song – How Great Thou Art <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNOYHTQqe6c>

Bible Reading – Micah 1:1-16 (NIV)

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. ² Hear, you peoples, all of you, listen, earth and all who live in it, that the Sovereign LORD may bear witness against you, the Lord from his holy

temple. ³ Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling-place; he comes down and treads on the heights of the earth. ⁴ The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope. ⁵ All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the people of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem? ⁶ '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. ⁷ All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.'

⁸ Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. ⁹ For Samaria's plague is incurable; it has spread to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself. ¹⁰ Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust. ¹¹ Pass by naked and in shame, you who live in Shaphir. Those who live in Zaanan will not come out. Beth Ezel is in mourning; it no longer protects you. ¹² Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief, because disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem. ¹³ You who live in Lachish, harness fast horses to the chariot. You are where the sin of Daughter Zion began, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. ¹⁴ Therefore you will give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The town of Akzib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. ¹⁵ I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah. The nobles of Israel will flee to Adullam. ¹⁶ Shave your head in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.

Announcements – 11th October 2020

- **Church Services this term.** In term 4 we are going to put the toe in the water and try morning teas and suppers after Church. So please stay around after Church, even if you don't normally stay around. It is so important that we continue to build many of the relationships that have been on pause for most of the year.
- **Finances.** Please note the following results for the month of August.

Offerings – Budget	27,330
Offerings – Actual	27,150
Deficit for August	180
Surplus for Jan-Aug	37,925

The committee of management is very thankful that through the generosity of our people and the access to the jobkeeper subsidy that our finances are in a healthy position at present.

- **Face masks.** Currently the NSW State government strongly recommended that people wear Face masks if they attend places of worship but stopped short from saying you had to wear face masks. We would strongly recommend that you do wear Face masks in church at the current time. There will be some washable facemasks available from the back of the Church if you would like one.
- **Operation Christmas Child.** Our Church is again involved in the Christmas boxes. This year there are two options. You can pick up a box fill it and return it to the church by Sunday 27th October. Or you can go online at <https://samaritanspurse.org.au/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/packonline/> And for a cost of \$30 you can pack a virtual Christmas box, add a personal note to the child and let Samaritan's Purse do the rest. See Kathryn for any more details.
- **Focus for October – Training.** No matter how good we are at doing things it is always good to sharpen our skills so that we can do things better into the future. So what do you do in the Church? Visiting, teaching, leading, praying? Why not a read a book on the subject during the month of October? Or go onto the internet to receive a talk on the subject? Or come along to our training day in two Sunday's time? And if you don't do anything in our Church, why not give something a go. Just speak to Jon or Stephen about it.
- **Prayer meetings.** Don't forget we now have just one prayer meeting for the church, each Monday at 7m on ZOOM. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89793950885>

- **Charlestown Work Day.** Don't forget next Saturday is our church work day. 8am to 12:30am. Come for an hour, come for the morning. But please register at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd92wY8hbU4Xk9aPJVTMM40Zs6PXGmh0adlkhln8Y_LGfPlag/viewform?usp=sf_link
- **Training Event.** Sunday October 25 from 3-5pm via ZOOM or live at Church we will be having time to grow our skills (and grow the pool of people willing to use their skills) in all aspect of service. So if you are currently on the rosters or are thinking of giving something a go please come to one of the following times (ZOOM link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89056717828>)

Church	ZOOM/Church Hall
3-3:30pm Computer/EW (Mike P/Peter B)	
3:30-4:00pm Sound (Peter B/Jon B)	Bible Reading/Prayer (Stephen T)
4:00-4:30pm Sound (cont)	Leading (Stephen T)
4:30-5pm Music (Jo B)	Welcoming (Stephen T/Simon M)

For more information just contact Stephen

Kids Talk – Quizworx. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHZ3dirIHdo>

Song – From the depths of woe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFWVVbzK78A>

Prayer Points for Sunday 11th October 2020

Pray for Tajikistan (Population 9 million, Christians 70,000). Government officials are responsible for most of the persecution in Tajikistan. They put heavy pressure on all groups viewed as a threat to their control by tightening and strictly enforcing restrictive laws. Authorities raid church meetings, detain Christians and confiscate religious materials. No religious activities are permitted outside of state-controlled institutions; children and teenagers are forbidden from taking part in any religious activities. Those whose faith is discovered are often pressured, harassed or beaten by their families to renounce their faith. Islamic topics are part of the school curriculum, and all children are required to attend. Despite this, many Christians are fearlessly sharing the gospel and witnessing Christ's love to those around them.

COVID-19. Pray for the work of a vaccine and for more effective treatments to deal with those who have COVID-19. Pray for the medical scientists working on solutions all over the world.

Pray for teachers, students and Principals as they head back to school this week. Pray especially for those who have struggled this year and need extra help and support.

Pray for our SRE Teachers in our region as they seek to offer the good news of Jesus in an environment that is not always welcoming.

Pray for the Applebys (Indochina). Praise God the fact that the countries in their region have the lost COVID rates in the world. Pray for the fact that each country is heavily locked down and so movement in and out is almost impossible. That means a number of missionaries are not able to get into the region as yet. Pray for the HOPE Christian school as they go back to face to face teaching. Pray for Gilbert as he seeks to lead a missionary organisation in the midst of great change.

Bible Reading – Micah 2:1-13 (NIV)

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, & houses & take them. They defraud people of their homes, they rob them of their inheritance. ³ Therefore, the LORD says: 'I am planning disaster against this people from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity. ⁴ In that day people will ridicule you; they will taunt you with this mournful song: "We are utterly ruined; my people's possession is divided up. He takes it from me! He assigns our fields to traitors." ⁵ Therefore you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.

⁶ ‘Do not prophesy,’ their prophets say. ‘Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.’⁷ You descendants of Jacob, should it be said, ‘Does the LORD become impatient? Does he do such things?’ ‘Do not my words do good to the one whose ways are upright?’⁸ Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle.⁹ You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children for ever. ¹⁰ Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy. ¹¹ If a liar and deceiver comes and says, “I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,” that would be just the prophet for this people!

¹² ‘I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a sheepfold, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. ¹³ The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.’

Sermon – The Slap <https://youtu.be/A19vzFd8SrQ>

The Slap was a 2008 novel by Australian author Christos Tsiolkas that became a television drama series on the ABC in 2011. It explores what happened when a man slaps a child, who is not related to him at a suburban BBQ. The child’s parents are up in arms and take the matter to the police who decide to press charges. And those who were at the BBQ begin to take sides. Was this form of discipline appropriate or completely over the top? What are the responsibilities of children and parents in today’s society? In the words of one TV commentator, as “each of the main characters are metaphorically slapped they are forced to face up to fundamental truths about themselves.”

Slide 2

When we turn to the prophet Micah we are going to witness God’s version of the Slap. We are going to enter into the world of ancient Israel and see that God is going to come and slap his people. For they have broken his covenant. They are doing the wrong things. They are exploiting and oppressing each other. And God has had enough. He is sending to them a just judgement. And as we watch what happens to the people of God in the past it is a slap in our face. What do we believe about justice? About sin? Greed? Pride? The next few weeks may be tough going for us but it is a message that God wants us to take to heart.

Slide 3

It begins in Micah 1:1, “The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz & Hezekiah, kings of Judah – the vision he saw concerning Samaria & Jerusalem”. You see this is God’s word. God’s unchanging word. At times God does speak to us about our world, our nation and ourselves. And because God doesn’t change, his word is a constant in our ever changing world. God’s word can and still should speak to us today.

Now this word was originally given to Micah of Morsheth, a country boy from the sticks who has to leave his home and travel to the big smoke. To Samaria, the prosperous capital of the northern kingdom of Israel and to Jerusalem where God has set up shop centuries before telling Solomon to build a temple there, a place where God would live amongst his people.

And in recent years these people had been prosperous & successful both economically & militarily. It was a boom time for God’s people. But there were dark clouds about to come in. During the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz & Hezekiah, the great nation of Assyria was beginning to flex its military muscle. These were good times but there was a fear the good times were about to come to an end. And so God sends His word and tells Micah to deliver

Slide 4

1. A Dark Truth (verses 2-7)

²“Hear, you peoples, all of you, listen, earth & all who live in it, that the Sovereign LORD may bear witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.” Now this is a message not just for God’s chosen people, the Israelites, it is relevant for all people. People everywhere and at every time. The Sovereign Lord is going to do something to his people that will affect us all.

Slide 5

³“Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling-place; he comes down and treads on the heights of the earth. ⁴The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.” God is coming and it’s not going to be pretty at all. It will be like crossing a volcano with a thunderstorm. The mountains are going to melt and the waters are going to completely flood us. Which is a strange combination.

But it is to give us the idea that calamity is coming from every direction. A force that is unstoppable & inescapable is about to break in on God’s people. And there will be nowhere to hide. Now why is this happening? ⁵“All this is because of Jacob’s transgression because of the sins of the people of Israel. What is Jacob’s transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah’s high place? Is it not Jerusalem?”

There is corruption at the heart of God’s people. In the seat of power. In the capital itself. There should be worship but there is rebellion. There should be obedience but there is disobedience. And God has had enough. He says, finally enough is enough.

Slide 7

⁶“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. ⁷All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.” Now what are idols doing amongst God’s people? Why would God’s people put others things before their wonderful God? And what are prostitutes doing at the temple? Shouldn’t God’s people be faithful to their marriage partners & faithful to their Saviour God.

Yes they should be. But they are not. The ones who have been given so much, have turned their backs on their good gift giver. The ones who have for generations been taught the truth about God and His World have ventured away into a brave new world. The ones who have been called to be a light for the nations have switched off the light, the ones called to be salt to keep away the worlds corruption have decided to keep the salt in the salt shaker.

Slide 8

And that is a real slap in the face to God’s chosen ones. The dark truth is that they have walked away from the light and God is going to come and give them what their sins deserve. And because this is God’s unchanging world I believe it is a slap in the face to us as well. What a spiritual heritage we have received from God here in Australia. We have been given God’s word, we have a beautiful place to live here in God’s world, we have access to God’s body, the Church, we have been blessed materially with homes, cars & a safe & prosperous society has been handed to us from previous generations & yet what have we done with it?

We have bitten the hand that has fed us. We have ignored God’s rules for our society. We have rejected his morality. We have loved our riches over His riches and so God is reminding us of the message of the book of Micah. He is slapping us hard to get our attention. He is saying to us if I have done this before I could well do it again. Judgement is coming. Justice is on its way. If you have want me to pay your wages for what you have done. Remember the wages of sin are death. So Australia wake up to yourself! And this dark truth leads to

Slide 9

2. A Deep Anguish (verses 8-9)

So the prophet Micah responds to such devastating news with tears. ⁸*"Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl."* ⁹*For Samaria's plague is incurable; it has spread to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself."*

If you think that COVID-19 is infectious, mankind's sin is even more infectious. It started with idolatry in the northern kingdom of Israel and it has now reached Judah. And there is no cure for this sin. There is no-one that can stop its relentless march. And Micah knows that the punishment will fit the crime. And so that leads him to grieve, to weep, to cry.

Slide 10

And at this stage he is not grieving over his own people. It is over the people of Samaria! He even cares for them. He doesn't want anyone to come under the judgement of God. So he kicks off his sandals, he takes off his clothes and like a man mourning over the death of a close relative he mourns over the coming of the judgement of God.

Slide 11

And that reminds me of another prophet, Jesus, entering his capital city Jerusalem knowing full well that they would reject him and his message. And as he looks down on Jerusalem, his eyes are full of tears. *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes."* If you would only turn to me, your judgement can still be averted. Here is Jesus crying over those who would condemn him to death. Here is Micah crying over people who are about to come under the judgement of God.

William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. He once sent a group of his workers to a difficult town and they failed in their efforts to reach the people. They telegraphed General Booth reporting they had tried everything, but nothing worked. They had fed them, clothed them, housed them, but there was no response. They asked for his orders. General Booth telegraphed two words in response: Try tears. His point? Jesus wept for his people. And he is the model of how we do ministry. He wept. And we should weep.

Friends, I'm not a crying person but I have to ask myself as I expect you to ask yourselves. When was the last time I cried over the people in this Church? Over the suburb that I live in? Over the nation that I am a citizen? Over the billions of people worldwide who don't know about Jesus? Friends where is our tears?

You might say to yourself, the Church has gone soft, where is the fire and brimstone sermons of the past? And maybe we have gone soft on God's truth but when we declare judgement on those around us we need to do it with tears in our eyes.

Finding his new preacher standing at his office window in the church building weeping as he looked over the inner city's lost condition, a church member sought to console him: "Don't worry. After you've been here a while, you'll get used to it." Responded the minister, "Yes, I know. That's why I am crying." Let us not get used to the dark truth that our world deserves God's judgement. That we deserve God's judgement. And one day judgement will come.

Slide 12

3. The dark truth, the deep anguish & thirdly the **Devastating Implications (v 10-16)**

For Micah now looks at the region just west of Jerusalem, at a number of small towns and that surround his own home town of Moresheth and he speaks directly to each of them warning them of what is to come. And the way he does it is lost in our English translations. For as he names each town, he finds Hebrew verbs that sound like the name of that town & there's a pun, there's a play-on-words bringing some force and power to his message.

Let me show you what I mean by from quoting from the Message, verse 10. *“Don’t gossip about this in Telltown. In Dustville, roll in the dust. In Alarmtown, the alarm is sounded. The citizens of Exitburgh will never get out alive. Lament, Last-Stand City: There’s nothing in you left standing. The villagers of Bittertown wait in vain for sweet peace. All you who live in Chariotville, get in your chariots for flight.”*

If Micah was preaching here today he might say their homes today will not be a New Castle but Old Ruins. The suburb of Charlestown will be renamed Snarls Town. Swansea will become a Vultures Desert. And Floraville will be turned into a concrete jungle. The effect of God’s judgement you see will be devastating. So much so that all his hearers should ¹⁶*“Shave your head in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.”*

God will let his people be defeated by their enemies. God will remove his blessings of land and favour away from his very own children. Because of their disobedience. And that same truth is brought home to us in the New Testament when Simon Peter says in 1 Peter 4:17, *“For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

I want us all to feel the force of that slap! God is talking about us, our town, our family, ourselves. Judgement starts with us. Yes it will go to the whole world but it starts with us. And that should humble us. It should make us repentant. It should put tears in our eyes. This is not a false alarm. This is not a false positive. It is real and that is because Micah tells us of

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4. God’s Dangerous Diagnosis (2:1-11)

“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.” Do you get it? God can see into our bedrooms? God can read our minds. He knows what are our plans are. He knows what our motives are. And there are some people who decide to do evil. And then have the power to bring that evil to life. But there is more

Slide 16

²*“They covet fields and seize them, & houses & take them. They defraud people of their homes, they rob them of their inheritance.”* For they covet. They look over their neighbour’s fence and want his house, his car, his wife, his life. They are not content with what God has given them, even in this time of plenty. They want more. And they don’t mind stepping on others to get what they want.

So they defraud people of their homes. They expect people to work for almost nothing. They don’t believe in a fair days wage for a fair days work. Instead they exploit the poor. They put pressure on the vulnerable. They oppress the people around them. And while they do that they are ignoring God’s law. That protected the poor. That cared for the refugee. That allowed people who lost their land and homes to get it back over time. But that doesn’t happen anymore. The rich get richer and the poor get the picture.

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Now that is getting very close to home for us today isn’t it? Isn’t the divide between rich and poor getting bigger and bigger? Can’t the rich afford their lawyers and their tax accountant & find loop hole after loop hole to justify their ever growing wealth? And don’t we condemn the poor to a cycle of poverty where it is almost impossible for some to break out of?

And aren’t we a part of the problem today? Do we care about the conditions of the workers who make our clothes? Are we concerned for the destruction of the rainforests that allow us to drink good coffee or have cheap palm oil? Do we care that if sea levels continue to rise that it will be the poor of the Pacific that will lose their homes before anyone else? And when we come to vote do we vote for the party that interested in overseas aid, in raising the living standards of our indigenous brothers and sisters, in ensuring there is justice in our courts and in our homes or do we only care about tax cuts and my standard of living?

Friends I am speaking to myself as much as you. This is a dangerous diagnosis for me as well as for you. For I am too often self sufficient and criticise those who are not self sufficient. I am proud about what I have achieved but then I have been given so much to achieve it.

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And so God says to me, to you, as well as the people of Judah, ³ *Therefore, the LORD says: 'I am planning disaster against this people from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity. ⁴ In that day people will ridicule you; ... ⁵ Therefore you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.'* God will judge us justly. He will give back to us what we have given to others. But this is not just a judgement on the people but also on our prophets and priests and religious teachers.

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Because too many of them only preached what people wanted to hear. ⁶ *'Do not prophesy,' their prophets say. 'Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.'* Don't talk about judgement, just talk about forgiveness. Talk about grace. Talk about heaven not hell. But Micah continues, you must hear the truth even if you can't handle the truth.

Slide 20

⁸ *"Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle. ⁹ You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children for ever. ¹⁰ Get up, go away!"* Stop exploiting the women. Stop stealing from the kids. In every society they are the most vulnerable people, the women and children. So stop oppressing others.

You see when the prophets only preach what people want to hear. Only talk about the good stuff. They are being complicit in the sins of the people. Our church leaders should talk about promises and precepts, comforts and commands. Actually they should keep pointing people to Jesus. For he was withering when he spoke to those who were abusing power and gentle when he reached out to those who were powerless. He talked about judgement and hell more than anyone else in the Bible and once people realised that they were in trouble, big trouble he told them to find their safety in the cross of Christ. He called people to accept the grace that God was offering us in the midst of judgement.

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Sometimes I hear people point the fingers at preachers and say they don't preach the gospel like they should. They don't preach judgement and hell as often as they should. And if you are a preacher or teacher you need to weigh that accusation very carefully. But then maybe our people don't turn from their greed often enough, they judge others harshly who haven't been given the blessing that they have been given.

Slide 22

And Micah wants to give us all a slap in the face. And we need to start with ourselves. Are we greedy? Do we covet? Are we violent? Are we proud? And are we just reading books that will back up your point of view? Watching news programme that backs our view of the world? Just going on the social media pages that back are our biases? Or are we open to the word of God? And if we are we will hear not just a devastating diagnosis but lastly about

5. A Delightful Hope (verse 12-13)

For in the midst of judgement there is still hope. There is renewal after God's rebuke. There is not just a light at the end of the tunnel, there is light for us as we go through the tunnel.

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I was watching on the news a couple of weeks back that some people had finally made it back to an abandoned rail way tunnel up near Wollemi where fires have devastated the entire landscape over our last summer holidays. They were concerned about the glow worms. Had they perished in the fires, because of

the smoke, the heat maybe? But no they hadn't. For they stepped into the tunnel and could see the light at the end of the tunnel but also the brilliant lights of thousands of glow worms while walking through the tunnel.

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And in the midst of a dark, dark time, when tough truths had to be told, we see that Micah ends this chapter with hope. *"I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a sheepfold, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people."* These lost sheep. These vulnerable sheep, God's very own sheep will not have to face this judgement alone. Their shepherd, their good shepherd will save them. He will care for them. He will feed them and protect them. It might be dark now but the light of the world Jesus is coming. Coming to shepherd his people. Coming to give us restoration after rebuke, hope in the midst of judgement.

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But God will not just give us a shepherd but a king. ¹³*"The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."* Our Shepherd King Jesus is our hope, our only hope in the face of God's judgement. And not just because of his tears for us, it is because he died for us. He was judged for us. He took what we deserved so that we might get what he gives.

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And that is one final slap to our self sufficiency, to our goodness, to our own self control. We can't do this without Jesus. We can't have hope without Jesus. We can't make it to the good pastures without our Good Shepherd Jesus. So this passage today is a slap in the face to each of us when we are greedy, when we are proud, when we covet or when we rest just in our creature comforts. And yet at the same time it is also a sign to the poor, the oppressed, the faithful and the remnant that renewal is coming through our Shepherd king.

Hopefully it will do both for us. It will comfort us when we are uncomfortable and confront us when we get too comfortable. It will warn us when we doing the wrong thing and it will welcome us when we repent and come back to Jesus. And it should also bring tears to our eyes, tears of gratitude for what we have received and tears of sadness for those who refuse to hear and respond to the word of God this day through the prophet Micah.

Song – His Mercy is More

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5EUvOnQr4Y>

Song – Will your anchor hold?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQQO8v-0VBo>

Benediction

¹²*"I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a sheepfold, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. ¹³The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."*

Morning Tea

Our morning tea is a vital way that we give and receive fellowship during a time like this. We don't want to be just consumers of Church, we want to be a part of the family of God. So why not give one or two people a call. Who might your ring now?