

He Delights in Steadfast Love

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here, not because we are trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community, and as we follow Jesus together, we've become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which means that God has something to say to everyone in his word, and that's why we come back week after week to open up the Bible and to hear what God has to say to us.

We're in the last Sunday of Advent, and as I've been telling you this whole month, Advent comes from a Latin word that means to come or arrive, and so Advent is simply the time of year when we celebrate the fact that Jesus came.

He arrived as a man in a manger in this world on this earth. And so we do two things. We celebrate Jesus' first coming when he came, and we also long for and look forward to his second coming, the fact that he has not just come once, but he's going to come again.

He is, as some people say, the once and future king. And now we're at the very end of our sampler pack of the book of Micah. You remember the book of Micah is a book written in the 8th century B.C., and it's filled with the prophecies of a man named Micah who was a prophet to Israel, the southern kingdom of Israel, Judah, in the 8th century, in between two times.

[1 : 32] It was after the great kings of Israel, after the times of Saul and David and Solomon, but before the exile. And so things are not going well for Israel, but they haven't gone into exile quite yet.

And it's a book about two things. It's a book about judgment and salvation. We saw that at the beginning, and even in this last section, we're at the very end of the book. We're going to read the last verse of Micah.

It's still about both judgment and salvation. Now, when I first came to this church, I know I've told you before that I'm a podcast guy.

I listen to a lot of podcasts, but there were some podcasts that I was not aware of until you all introduced me to them. And soon after I came here, a couple members of Cheyenne Mountain told me about the podcast called The World and Everything in It, which is a news podcast run by World Magazine.

And World Magazine, if you're familiar with it, is a news magazine that comes out twice a month that gives the news from a Christian worldview. So give a Christian perspective on what's happening in the world. I grew up reading the kids version of World Magazine.

[2 : 38] And so it was fun to rediscover it in a podcast form. And if you're familiar with this news blip, it comes out on Monday through Friday. And every Monday, they have a feature called Legal Docket. And Legal Docket is a time where they look at what are the cases that are coming before the Supreme Court.

And often, they'll look at a case before it's been decided. So they'll say, here's the case that's coming up. Here are the two sides. Here's the issue at stake. And then they might even play some clips from different Supreme Court justices talking about it.

And they'll try to guess. They might say, we're not sure how this one's going to go. We might say, it's probably going to end in this way based on the evidence they have. But there will be a gap, right? You may have to wait several months between the time the case shows up and the way that you find out how it's going to end.

This is familiar to me because growing up, my dad was also a news junkie. And he would read the Supreme Court cases when they came out. And then he would discuss them with us at the dinner table. He'd say, OK, this is the court case that was decided.

Here's how it ended up. Here's why it ended up that way. Anyway, we are finishing up Micah's legal docket. If you remember all the way back three weeks ago when we looked at Micah chapter 1, I began by telling you that God had a court case that he was suing his people.

[3 : 51] And he was suing his people for the sins that were outlined in chapters 1 through 3. Now, we skipped chapter 6. But in chapter 6, it's brought up again that God is suing his people.

And so there's a court case that God is bringing against Israel because of the ways that they have failed to obey his law. And now we get to find out the end of the case.

We get to see how it's decided. And so our question of this passage is simply, how does it end when God sues you? What is the outcome of God's court case against you?

That's what Micah is going to tell us in this passage. We're in Micah chapter 7, and we're going to start at verse 8. You can find this near the end of your worship guide. You can find it at the end of Micah in your Bible.

You can certainly find it on your phone. But whatever medium you're using to come to it, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold.

[4 : 51] And it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. That's why we read it now, starting at verse 8. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy.

When I fall, I shall rise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me.

He will bring me out to the light. I shall look upon his vindication. Verse 10. Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, Where is the Lord your God?

My eyes will look upon her. Now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets. Verse 11. A day for the building of your walls. In that day the boundary shall be far extended.

In that day they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the river, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their deeds.

[6 : 03] Verse 14. Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance who dwell alone in a forest, in the midst of a garden land. Let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old.

As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt. I will show them marvelous things. Verse 16. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might.

They shall lay their hands on their mouths. Their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth. They shall come trembling out of their strongholds.

They shall turn in dread to the Lord our God, and they shall be in fear of you. Verse 18. Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

[7 : 10] You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Father in heaven, we thank you again that you speak to us, that you haven't left us to figure out life on our own.

And we confess that we don't just need you to speak to us, but we need your help to understand your words. And so we ask simply that you would send your Holy Spirit now and that you would give us that help, that we would be able to see and believe and understand and rejoice over everything that you've written for us in your word.

And we ask these things not because we deserve them, but because Jesus intercedes for us. And so we ask them in his mighty name. Amen. Now you know that if someone sues you, there's all kinds of different strategies you can pursue, right?

You can try to settle out of court. You can try to maybe have a plea bargain. You confess to some of the things you're accused of and maybe other things you're accused of get wiped away.

[8 : 34] Maybe you get a lesser punishment. Things get changed. You can decide whether you want to plead innocent or guilty. There's actually an option that not a lot of people know about where you plead neither.

It's called a nolo contendere. I don't contend. So I'm not saying I didn't do it, but I'm not saying I did do it. Regardless, there's a lot of different ways that you can approach a court case and maybe you receive advice from your lawyer about what it is that you need to do.

There's only one strategy, though, that's going to work when God sues you. We're asking what happens when God brings a case against you and there's only one good option if you want it to end well.

And that is this, to plead guilty. That's what we see here almost immediately in verse 9. Micah tells us, I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him.

He's not trying to do a plea bargain. He's not saying, well, I'm going to admit, yes, we were oppressing the poor. Let's just focus on that one. Let's not focus on the sins of the leaders because we have enough of a punishment here.

[9 : 46] Instead, he just admits to all of it. He pleads guilty on every charge. We see that not just in verse 9, but then later in verse 18, we have a reference to the remnant of his inheritance, who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant.

Now, remnant's a rich word in the Old Testament, but it's essentially the people who remain faithful to God. So there are Israelites who do not repent. They are not part of the remnant.

They are not part of the portion that will return from exile and be able to worship God again in Jerusalem. Now, in the world that we're in, we're used to maybe plea bargaining, maybe settling out of court.

God doesn't do that. God doesn't do plea bargaining. God doesn't settle out of court. And God doesn't give a lighter sentence.

Instead, he takes the sentence. God doesn't give a lighter sentence. Instead, he takes the sentence. God doesn't change the punishment.

[10 : 56] The punishment stays the same. The one receiving the punishment changes. The punishment doesn't change. The one receiving the punishment changes.

We see this in verse 9, a shocking answer to what happens when God brings a case against us. Because on the one hand, Micah pleads guilty, right?

I have sinned against him. And there's this next word, until. I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light.

I shall look upon his vindication. In other words, this is a court case where the prosecutor is going to switch sides in the courtroom. He's going to walk over from the prosecution side to the defending side.

And after he's argued his case against you, he's then going to walk to the other side and defend you. That's what happens when God brings a case if you choose the option of pleading guilty.

[11 : 58] If you repent before God in faith, he will switch sides in the courtroom. He will plead your case for you rather than arguing against you.

So what happens when God brings a case against you? Well, it really depends on how you respond. If you plead guilty, if you confess your sins in repentance and agree with God that without his help, you deserve his punishment and his wrath, God will come to your defense.

If you do not agree with God and you plead innocent, he will not come to your defense. And so we see the other option in verse 10. The enemy of God's people will see and shame will cover her who said to me, where is the Lord your God?

My eyes will look upon her. Now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets. In other words, the nations that are coming up against Israel to take them into exile because they are not repenting before God of their sins will one day experience the very judgment that God is using them to bring.

There are two options. Plead guilty and God will plead for you. Plead innocent and God will punish you.

[13 : 19] We see this in verse 13 as well. The earth will be desolate because of the inhabitants for the fruit of their deeds. God is bringing judgment to the world. But he offers to plead the case of those who plead guilty before him.

And so it all depends on how you respond. Do you agree with God and plead guilty or do you rebel against him and plead innocent?

It's a very simple equation that Micah gives us here. And this passage is a very simple summary of the gospel. The readers of this passage, the original recipients, people living in the 8th century listening to Micah would have known God's character.

They would have known God's a God, as we're going to see later, a God of steadfast love. He is going to come and redeem us and plead our case after the exile. They knew his character. They did not know his solution.

They did not know how God was going to bring justice and liberate people who were guilty. They did not know how God was going to free the guilty.

[14 : 28] They just knew that he would. Now we, 27, 28, hundred years later, know not just God's character but God's solution.

And what we celebrate at Christmas, at Advent, is God's character and his solution. Christmas is good news. Christmas is good news only for Christians and Christmas is only good news for Christians because Christmas is the good news of knowing how it is that God will plead the case of the guilty.

He's going to plead the case of the guilty because he sent his son to become a man. Gospel is a simple message and it's this. God sent his son to become a man. He sent his son to become a man so that he could die.

And he died so that he could suffer the penalty for our sins. And he suffered the penalty for our sins so that he could restore us to God. And as we've seen the last couple weeks, he could restore this world.

He's coming for his citizens and those citizens are also part of his kingdom. God, as we saw last week, is sending his king.

[15 : 46] And he's sending his king both to come and restore and to come and die. And we cannot separate those two. And so God's solution is to give forgiveness to those who have explicit faith in Jesus Christ who have repented of their sins and have pled guilty to the charge against them.

God will plead their case because of Jesus. I mentioned three weeks ago that Micah's name is also a question.

Micah's name means who is like Yahweh, who is like God. And that in some ways is the question of the book of Micah. Who is like God? That question becomes explicit in verse 18.

Who is a God like you? The answer is this. Who's a God like Yahweh? No one. No one is a God like Yahweh and no one is a God like Yahweh because God's vindication means not that he will bring punishment on his people but that he will do away with their sin.

God's vindication is different from anyone else's vindication. He is different from any other prosecutor. No other prosecutor would try to lose his case.

[17 : 04] But this prosecutor comes to argue the case of his enemy. Again, verse 9, he's going to take us from darkness. Verse 8, we're told, I sit in darkness.

Verse 9, he will bring me out to the light. God is the one who's going to bring his people from darkness into light. His vindication means he's going to do away with sin.

Now, I'm focusing just on a few specific parts of this passage. This is a very long passage that we read that I wanted to give you the context for. We're not going to go through everything in it. I'll just quickly summarize here in verses 11 through 12, 11 through 13, God's going to restore Jerusalem. And when he restores it, it's going to be better than it ever was before. It's what we've seen before in chapters 4 and 5, that God is restoring not just his people but his kingdom. And then what we saw in chapter 5, he is coming to be a good shepherd, verses 14 through 17.

He's going to restore his people to their kingdom, their place, and he's going to restore them to him. And he's going to do that vindication. He's going to bring it, verses 18 and 19, because he delights in steadfast love.

[18 : 19] What gets God excited is forgiving his people. What God delights in is being faithful to his people.

This is the same word, the steadfast love word, that we saw when we looked at the book of Ruth in 2018. This is God's never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

That is what God delights in. That is what makes God come to his people. And what does he do when he delights in steadfast love?

Well, verse 19, he will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

When I was growing up, we had some friends who taught us that when you put a can in the recycling bin, if you want to save space, you don't just put the can in.

[19:17] You need to smash it first. And so we would practice smashing cans, and it's a little bit of an art because you want to stomp it, and you need to stomp it fast enough that it just crushes down and it's a circle.

If you do a good job, you'll get a perfect circle. If you do a bad job, it'll just be kind of this flat landing strip. And so we would practice crushing the cans before we threw them into the recycling bin.

Micah tells us that God doesn't just throw away our sins. He crushes them first. God delights so much in steadfast love that the language here that's used is of a war against sin.

God is on the move. We saw in chapter one that God was coming and shaking the mountains with his feet in judgment. And Micah's a great poet and so is God.

And so as he begins the book crushing the mountains, he's going to end the book crushing our sins. As his feet come in judgment in chapter one, God's feet are going to come in redemption in chapter seven.

[20:28] The same God who comes in anger and wrath is the God who comes to have compassion on us. And the same God who comes on the top of the mountains is going to take our sins and put them in the bottom of the sea.

And so there's a beautiful bookend here between chapter one and chapter seven. We heard the beginning of God's case and now we see the end. It's not two different gods but the same God.

The God who comes to punish is also the God who comes to redeem and he comes to redeem anyone and everyone who agrees with Micah in verse nine. I have sinned against him.

That's what God offers to everyone who has faith in Christ turning away from their sins and to Jesus. And so as we come to Advent we can know that God takes our sins and he stomps them and then he puts them in the bottom of the sea where no one can find them.

Maybe you have repeated over and over the way that other people have sinned in an attempt to make yourself feel better in the midst of insecurity.

[21:47] God takes that sin and he treads it under his feet and he casts it into the bottom of the sea. Maybe you're in a sexual relationship with someone that you're not married to and you thought if someone would just accept me in that way and want me in that way then maybe I could prove that I'm really worthwhile.

You want to be desired and accepted and instead it left you feeling empty. God has stomped that sin under his foot and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

Maybe you realized the best that you could do in school were bees and you were afraid of what your parents would think and so you began bringing things with you into tests that you weren't supposed to so that you would know the answers that weren't in your head.

in Christ God has taken that sin and stomped it under his feet and he's cast it into the sea. Maybe there's a season where you couldn't fall asleep without an addiction.

Maybe it was a sexual addiction maybe it was narcotics but that was the only way you were able to find rest. God has tread that sin under his feet and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

[23:18] Maybe you're over at a friend's house and they had that movie that your parents won't let you watch and that you've never seen before and you told them that it was your favorite movie and you'd seen it many times and you just wanted to see it one more time.

God has taken that sin and treaded under his feet. And he has cast it into the bottom of the sea. Maybe your kids are grown now and you still think about the times that you yelled at them.

Desperate for them to make you look good. And now you wish you could take it back. God has taken that sin and he has treaded under his feet and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

maybe there was that night that you had too much to drink and you said something to someone that you love that you would give anything to take back.

But you can't unsay it. God has taken that sin and he has trampled it under his feet and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

[24:31] maybe you did something wrong and you covered it up rather than fixing it and you wish you could go back. God has taken that sin and he has smashed it under his foot and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

Maybe you felt threatened by someone else and so you started gossiping about them and you can't undo the damage that's been done. God has taken that sin and he stomped it under his feet and he's cast it into the bottom of the sea.

Maybe you had it in your power to help someone who was hurting but you didn't because it would make you uncomfortable and you always wonder what if. God has taken that sin and he's trampled it under his feet and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

Maybe you take credit for your accomplishments and your success looking down on other people who couldn't get it together and now you realize God is the one who gave you and there's a wake of bodies behind you.

God has taken that sin and trampled it under his feet and he has cast it into the bottom of the sea.

God came at the beginning trampling on the mountains and now he comes at the end trampling on our sins and he does it because of his son who came not as a conquering warrior but as a humble king or in a manger.

[26 : 17] And so how does it end when God sues you for those who have faith in Christ it ends in this way. You who have humbly confessed your sins and seek the mercy of God hear the good news from Micah chapter 7 who is a God like you pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance.

He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

In Jesus Christ the Lord forgives you all of your sins and we'll remember them no more. Let's pray. Father in heaven we praise you that you sent your son so that without fear we could confess our sin to you knowing that you are a prosecutor who will come and help us.

[27 : 37] You're a prosecutor like none other and so we ask that you would help us to see that to know the safety that we have to come and confess our sins to you and the forgiveness that you offer that you don't just forgive but you trample.

You trample our sins under your feet because that is how strong and how powerful your steadfast love is. We ask that you would give us the knowledge of that that would give us joy that would fill our hearts this week as we celebrate your coming and we ask these things praising you that it's in the name of Jesus.

Amen.