

A Restored World

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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.

We are in our second Sunday in the season of Advent. As I mentioned last week, Advent comes from a Latin word that means to come or to arrive, and so it's simply when we celebrate the fact that Jesus came and he arrived on this earth as a human being.

So we take the four weeks that come before Christmas to basically do two things. We celebrate the past. We celebrate the fact that Jesus did come. That's why we sing songs like Joy to the World, and we also take that time to long for the future and look forward.

So that's why we sing songs like O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. We're doing both of those things, and as I mentioned last week, those are really two things that we're always doing in the Christian life. We are always looking back to what God has done in the past that we can celebrate.

We're always looking forward to what God will do in the future and looking with longing towards that, knowing that he's going to make all things new, as we read in our New Testament passage this morning.

[1 : 14] And we're using both of those things, the past and the future, to affect how we live in the present. That we live as people who believe what happened when Jesus came and lived and died, and we live as people who believe that he's coming again.

He's coming again to make all things new. When I was living in St. Louis and I was going to seminary, I decided I wanted to get to know some people who were not Christians.

I was, of course, surrounded by many Christians, being in seminary constantly, and that was also where I had a job, so I was on campus all the time. So I decided to join a running group that ran in the park very close to where I lived.

Now, it turned out this group was not a group. It was just me and one other man, which is fine. We got to decide. We know we made real clear decisions about when the group would meet, where exactly we would run.

We'd meet when it was convenient for the both of us and where it was convenient for the both of us. And as I got to know this man, who was not a Christian, he began to share with me some of the things that were going on in his life, and he had several struggles.

[2 : 19] One of them was in his marriage. He desperately loved his wife, and yet she didn't believe that he did. She constantly doubted whether he actually had feelings for her, why he had married her, what his reasons for doing that were.

And as I got to know him, it became clear that he actually had trouble expressing his emotions. This was someone who felt things but didn't know how to put them out so that other people could see them. He also shared with me that he had grown up with a father who was incredibly angry.

And so as a child, as a youth, he had made a vow. He had made a vow that he would never be angry in the way his father was angry. And of course, what he had not done, what he didn't realize, he had not put those two things together as being related.

What he thought was that he was making a vow to never be angry, never express anger, but really he was making a vow to never express emotion. Because of course, as counselors will tell you and psychologists, our emotions are not something that we can parse out.

We can't decide, well, I'm going to not experience anger and bitterness. I'm just not going to have those emotions, but I'm also going to have lots of joy and happiness. It just does.

[3 : 34] The human heart doesn't work like that. Our emotions are a switch that we can turn on and off. And so what this man had done when he decided to not be like his father, he'd actually jeopardized himself in his marriage.

Because in choosing not to express any anger, he'd made it impossible for him to express love and delight in his wife. And of course, she felt that. We're coming to the book of Advent, the book of Micah again in Advent.

And as I told you last week, it's a book about both judgment and salvation. And as we talked about last week, we can't decide to have one of those and not the other. Judgment and joy go together. We can't decide, okay, I'm not going to have any confession of sin. I'm not going to focus on the ways I need to repent. I'm not going to think about God's judgment. And yet I want to have incredible joy.

I want to have the joy of the season. Those are part and parcel, just like our emotions. Just like you can't choose to not have anger, but you're going to have joy. You can't choose to not have judgment, but then have joy.

[4 : 36] Those are things, as we looked at last week, that go together. And that is what the book of Micah is about. It's a book of both judgment and salvation. And we have to have both of those.

Now, I mentioned that it's, as one man has said, it's about 70% judgment and 30% salvation. We're flipping that a little bit because it's Advent. And we're looking at the book through a very specific lens. Last week, we looked at God's judgment coming down in chapter one.

We're skipping chapters two and three this week. Chapters two and three, however, I summarized very briefly last week, include more judgment. And so it's after three chapters of judgment that God then comes with his word of salvation and hope.

It's after chapters one through three that we come to chapter four. And so we're moving beyond.

We're moving beyond the judgment to the joy.

Last week was necessary, but not sufficient, right? God's judgment by itself is only bad news. And so we need the good news that also accompanies it, the good news of God's salvation.

[5 : 39] At the end of chapter three, which we skipped, God finally comes down. And after he's listed all the reasons that he's judging his people, the corruptness of their leaders, their oppression of the poor, the consequence is that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed.

The city of God's people is going to be laid waste. It's with that word of judgment then that we come to chapter four, which is the word of hope. He told, he's told his people what's about to happen, and now he's going to tell them a future vision.

What they can look forward to and hope in, even as God's punishment is coming towards them. We begin then this week, the words of hope and salvation from the book of Micah.

That's where we're going to be the next two weeks as well. We're going to look at chapter five next week, which is another word of hope. And then the very end of chapter seven, right before Christmas, which is the final word of hope that comes in the book of Micah.

And our question this morning is, okay, if we have this judgment and we have this joy that go together, what about the world that Jesus is bringing in his second coming actually gives us joy?

[6 : 46] Why should we look forward to Jesus' second coming and not just celebrate his first? What is it that's going to give us joy? If God has already saved us, what more do we need?

What is it about the world that God is bringing that we can rejoice in and long for? It's with that that we're going to be in Micah chapter four. I invite you to turn there with me in your Bibles.

It's also printed near the end of your worship guide. You can probably find it on your phone as well. And as we 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.

And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. That's why we read it now, starting at verse one. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains.

And it shall be lifted up above the hills and peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.

[7 : 55] For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide for strong nations far away.

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree. And no one shall make them afraid. For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Verse five. For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its God. But we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.

Father, I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Father in heaven, we thank you that you know that we are but dust as you tell us in the Psalms.

[8 : 59] And that we need hope. And we need pictures and images and visions to look forward to and long for. You know that we're people of stories and so you've given them to us.

We ask that you would send your spirit this morning and that you would help us as we come to Micah chapter 4. We ask that you would use this picture to stir up our hope and our faith in you. And that we would long more and more and pray more and more for the future world that you are bringing. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

I'm sure if I were to poll everyone in this room, we would have a variety of different opinions about immigration.

All kinds of things that we would think about how and when people who are not U.S. citizens should access the U.S. We would probably have some debates and arguments over it.

[10 : 01] That's not my goal this morning. That's not why I bring it up. But there is something in the midst of all that disagreement that my hope is that we would all agree on. We might disagree on political solutions and ideas.

We might disagree about what's right and what's wrong. My guess is that we would agree on this. People risk their lives to get to the United States. And people risk their lives because this is a place that has opportunities and prosperity.

And not only do people risk their lives, we might even say people stream to the U.S. We could even use this language. We might say peoples shall flow to us. Many nations will come.

Oh, wait. That's the language at the beginning of Micah chapter 4. Micah's painting a vision for us of what the future will look like. And this is a future where people are not streaming to the United States or any other country.

They are streaming to Jerusalem. We see this in verses 1 and 2. It shall be lifted up above the hills, and peoples shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.

[11 : 17] In other words, there are these latter days, and the latter days can be interpreted in various ways. Basically, it just means sometime in the future when people will be clamoring. They won't be clamoring to get to New York City or London.

They won't be clamoring to get to Paris or Hong Kong. But they will be clamoring to get to God's city. That's the place where they're going to want to be more than anything else.

That's what's going to happen in the world that Jesus is bringing. And not only are they going to be longing for that city above all the other cities, we're told this city is higher than the others, which is a way of saying it's going to be the most prominent.

People are going to no longer, if they look at a list of the most important cities of the world, God's city is going to be at the top of the list. And they're not going to look anymore to the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, the Harvard Business Review, as the place where they're going to find what's most true and helpful in this world.

Instead, they're going to look to God and his word. That's going to be the place that people are longing for and coming to. That's going to be where they're finding what is true and good.

[12 : 23] While God is destroying Jerusalem now, he is going to restore it. And one day, God's word and God's city will be the place of greatest influence and the source of greatest influence.

That is what God's people have to look forward to and long for as they live in a time when they know that Jerusalem is going to be sacked. God is coming back to restore.

And he's going to come back and restore in such a way that the nations, all peoples, not just the Jews, are going to be desperate to get to his city. When I was growing up, my mom would tell me from time to time, she would say, Matthew, people will climb over walls to get to the truth.

In the latter days, people will climb over walls to have access to God's presence and God's word. They will be so desperate for the truth that God has to offer.

And so this is part of the vision that Micah gives these people as they see destruction coming. We can say now, one question as we come to passages like this is, what do we do with these kinds of prophecies? Prophecies like this are often more like dimmer switches and less like on and off

switches.

[13:47] That is, prophecy is something often that happens gradually over time. So we can say, in a sense, this has been fulfilled in part. Many nations come to hear God's word.

How do I know that? Because you all are here this morning. And not many, if any of you, are Jews. So God is already fulfilling his promise through Jesus.

Remember, it's when Jesus came that the great expansion of God's word and his people began. It was at Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2, right after Jesus had gone back to heaven, that the Holy Spirit was poured out on all nations.

And so there's a sense in which this prophecy has been partially fulfilled now. It's partially fulfilled in the sense that you're not streaming to Jerusalem, but you're streaming to the church. You're streaming to a place where God's word is taught and proclaimed.

Many nations are coming. And in fact, we wait. So it's been partially fulfilled. It hasn't been fully fulfilled. In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus tells us that the gospel needs to be preached to all nations.

[14:55] And so we continue to wait for that full fulfillment. And then we're told in Revelation chapter 7, that there's going to come a time when all nations and tongues and tribes are going to worship God.

And so we celebrate that in part, and we continue to look forward to when it will happen in full.

Sometimes the question is, why does this matter for us now?

We're in this season of Advent. And how it matters for us now is, number one, we can praise God for what he's already done. Because of Jesus, you have access to God, even though you are not a Jew right now.

That's part of what we celebrate. We celebrate at Advent that God is bringing many nations to his city, many nations, including you. And we can also look forward to the time when we will experience that in full.

And so we celebrate it. There's already proof, by the way. There is measurable progress in God's plan. From Micah's time in the 8th century to now, we can say a lot of things have happened in terms of the nations streaming to God.

[16:09] This is not some pie-in-the-sky hope. This is a dimmer switch that we have seen. We can look back in history and we can see it being turned on. We can look at the history of Christian missions and know, wow, Micah chapter 4, that prophecy that was given in the 8th century, has in part begun and will one day be completed and finished.

And so God gives his people a vision of the future that can give them hope. We can take confidence that this prophecy is true because we can see already the ways in which it is being fulfilled.

And at Christmas, part of what we celebrate is that we belong to God's people. And we belong to God's people because of Jesus. Jesus was the one that made it possible for many nations to come. So our hope is that in the future, systems and organizations and people will be shaped by God and his word because it's these nations that are streaming to hear it.

So we celebrate that. God included us. Now, at this point, you might be afraid. You might be thinking, man, this sounds like these people are streaming to hear the word of God. I think that could be good, but I also don't want a future city.

[17:27] And the city is nothing but Sunday school. Don't get me wrong. I love Sunday school, but there's other things, right, that I want to live in this world. Well, if you're afraid of that, this vision continues. God's word is not just something that exists for its own sake, but it leads to the transformation of his people.

God's word does something. You might not be a Christian. You might be wondering, okay, if I'm not a Christian, why should I care that God's word is going to be going out for all peoples and they'll be streaming to it?

Why is that good for me? Last week, we looked at the fact that idolatry and behavior go together, and that means that wrong worship, what people were condemned for in Micah 1, led to wrong behavior.

That's what Micah chapters 2 and 3 are about. Right worship also leads to right behavior. God's word going to all the peoples is good news because it is going to lead to peace and justice and flourishing and life for the world.

And that's the picture we see in the next two verses. We get a picture of what God's word creates. It creates peace. There are many people who talk about their desire for world peace, and here we

find out how it's going to happen, verses 3 and 4.

[18 : 43] The city of the Lord is going to be a place where he shall judge, verse 3, between many peoples and shall decide for strong nations far away. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. Worshiping God, the nation streaming to him, means that war is going to end.

That's why it's good news, whether you're a Christian or not, you should want and long for people to go to God's city and learn his ways.

And if you're not a Christian, you should want to be one of those people. You should want to become a Christian so that you are included in this world of peace that's envisioned in this passage. Some of you may be familiar with an evangelist whose name is Ravi Zacharias.

He's a popular speaker, and at one point in 2012, he gave a talk at a prayer breakfast, an international prayer breakfast, and he told a story near the end about how he had been invited to take part in some peace talks in the Middle East.

[19 : 53] And during this peace talks, he tells it this way. He says, We were meeting with religious and political leaders. We had spent five tiring days.

On the last day, we were with a sheik. We were sitting in a room enjoying a lovely lunch with lamb, rice, and other delectables. Having spent 18 years in prison, the sheik told us all kinds of stories. After lunch, the archbishop, it's the person who'd invited him, being the chief guest, gave the five of us with him an opportunity to ask one question. I looked at the sheik, and I asked him my one question.

I will not give you my question, nor will I give you his answer. Then I looked at him, and I said, Sheik, sir, you and I will probably never see each other again, and I hope I do not offend you. I want to share just one thing with you and leave you with that. I said, not far from where you and I are seated is a mountain. 5,000 years ago, a man you and I respect by the name of Abraham wanted to show his faith in God, and he took his son up that mountain.

[21 : 03] Do you remember that story? He said, yes. I said, he was willing to sacrifice his own son as an expression of faith in God.

He said, yes. I said, as the axe was about to come down, God stopped that axe. Do you remember the story? He said, yes. I said, what did God say to him when he stopped him?

He said, I don't know. I said, God said, stop. I myself will provide. He said, that's right.

And I said, sir, 2,000 years ago, God kept that promise. A stone's throw from where you and I are sitting is a hill called Calvary, where he took his own son and offered that son for you and for me. Sheik, until you and I receive the son God has provided, we will be offering our own sons and daughters on the battlefields of this world for position, power, prestige, and control.

[22 : 14] Zion is going to be lifted up as the highest of the hills, and it's going to be a place of peace. Why? Because God sacrificed his own son so that we could have peace.

God's word is not something abstract, but it is real in time and space, something that brings peace to the world.

And even more than that, God sent his son, who was the word made flesh, as we read last week, sacrificed on Zion, which will one day be the highest of the mountains, bringing judgment on him so that we can have peace.

It's because of that reason we can have verse 3, he will judge between many peoples and shall decide for strong nations far away, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Because of Jesus, God is bringing peace into this world. And so that's part of what we celebrate at Advent. One day, there will no longer be clashes between police and protesters in Hong Kong.

[23 : 33] One day, there will be no more conflict in Syria. One day, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia will be at peace with one another. One day, the war on terror will end.

And the special operations forces won't have to send people in to kill terrorist leaders. And that day will come because of Jesus. It won't happen just on a political scale, but it will happen on a personal scale as well.

We're not told this in this passage, but of course, if this kind of peace is going to be brought, how much more will we see personal peace? Mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws will get along.

Fathers and sons will get along.

People will no longer post on Nextdoor about how their car was broken into, followed by 10 comments. And this is not just something that's destructive.

God is bringing it through restoration. He's not destroying the world, doing away with it. He's restoring it. That's the vision that's given here. Swords aren't done away with.

[24 : 42] They're turned into plowshares. Spears aren't done away with. They're turned into pruning hooks. We might say today, snipers are going to take their scopes, and they're going to teach kids how to bird watch.

God is doing with Jerusalem an act of restoration. At the end of chapter 3, it's being destroyed. It will be built again. He's doing, with the artifacts of war, a work of restoration.

And he's doing, in our lives, a work of restoration as well. You know this intuitively. If you have a difficult relationship, you don't think, man, I just wish this person would go away, right? That's not the right longing.

Their longing is that it would be restored, that it would be right again. God is bringing peace to this world through Jesus. He is the one bringing it to bear.

And so why is it that we long, as I asked at the beginning, why do we long for Jesus' second coming? What is it about the restored world that would bring us joy? The restored world brings us joy, first of all, because it's a world where people are longing and climbing over walls to get to God's presence and God's word.

[25 : 53] Second, it's a place that we long for, because that longing for God's word will result in world peace. It will result in the peace that people long for.

There's a reason that Jesus is called the Prince of Peace, and that peace will be possible because of his sacrifice for us on the cross. And then we're left with a final word after these two reasons.

Verse 5, I mentioned earlier that God gives us pictures.

He gives us images and visions. He knows that we are people. We need hope. We need real concrete hope. And so he gives us this image as real concrete hope. These images of God's restoration in the future are meant to affect how we live now.

This picture is not meant to just be a pretty picture for us to ponder, but it's something that's supposed to affect our faithfulness, that we continue to have faith in Christ and walk forward in this world, living in a way that cuts against the culture because of what we see in the future.

[27 : 05] And so this vision is meant to change the way that God's people live, and that's what they're talking about in verse 5. One day, all the peoples are going to stream to Jerusalem.

That's not happening right now. Verse 5, All the peoples do what? They don't walk to Jerusalem. They walk each in the name of its God. In other words, this vision has not been completely fulfilled yet.

What are we going to do while we wait? We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. In other words, no matter what destruction comes, no matter how difficult it is for us to live faithfully to God in this time, we have seen a vision of what God is bringing in the future in such a way that it gives us the hope and the confidence to be able to continue walking now as people who believe that everything God has said is true.

And we can stream to God's city and receive his word even now as we wait for him to bring it around finally and fully. No matter what the peoples do, no matter how much they walk in the names of their God, we are going to stay faithful to Yahweh.

We are going to continue to hope in what he has said. We are going to continue to obey his word even when it cuts against what the nations around us are telling us.

[28 : 29] Because we live knowing that this picture will one day be true. Some of you may be familiar with the book, *The Man in the High Castle*, which came out in the 1960s.

It's a dystopian novel that's now been made into an Amazon Prime series, so it has a second life now. People are aware of it. And it tells a basic story, and it's a what if. What would happen if the Allies had lost World War II?

And in this story, the West Coast is controlled by the Japanese and the East Coast by the Germans. Colorado, by the way, is a no man's land.

Canyon City is the middle point, apparently. And in this world, of course, being controlled by these governments, there's incredible atrocities that are committed. This is a violent world to live in.

And yet there's a group of people in this world who continue to resist. There's a resistance, and there's a reason that they resist, despite the power that they're up against.

[29 : 33] There is an alternate story. This group that's resisting has had access to videos that show an alternate reality in which the Allies actually won. And those videos are so inspiring for them that they begin to live their lives as if that is what's true.

And day after day, as they're fighting against the power of the Japanese and the power of the Germans, they're able to continue to have hope for a future. They're able to continue doing what is dangerous and risky because they believe in something that is even more powerful than the world that they're in.

They have a glimpse of what could be, and it keeps them living faithfully in the present. Brothers and sisters, we do not have a glimpse of what could be.

We have a glimpse of what will be so that we can continue living faithfully in the present. That is why God has given us Micah chapter 4.

We keep hoping in God and living faithfully now as we wait and long for what God will bring in the future. And so why is it that we long for God's new world?

[30 : 55] What about it is it that will bring us joy? It brings us joy because it's a place where all the nations long for God's presence in his word. It's a place where there is full and final peace on this earth.

And because we know that and believe it and trust it, we can live faithfully now no matter what. For all the peoples walk, each in the name of its God.

But we, at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. Please pray with me.

Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you that you have not left us alone, but you've given us a glimpse of the future that we would be able to keep going with trust and hope and faith in you.

We thank you for the life that your word gives and we ask for it now that you would give us hope.

You would help us to celebrate what you have already done in Christ and that you would help us, you'd stir up our longing and our affection for what is going to become full and finally true one day.

[32 : 15] We ask these things not because we have earned them, but because you gave your son to die 2,000 years ago for us. And so we ask these things in his name.

Amen.