

SERMON  
First Lutheran Church  
Aitkin, Minnesota

Micah 1:3-5; 5:2-5a; 6:6-8  
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen  
November 11, 2018

**KIDS' MESSAGE** (Volunteers needed to act out the parts – 1 farmer, two travelers, many townspeople.) There is an old story about a farmer working out in his field by the road one day. As he worked away with his horse and plow, a stranger came walking by. The man stopped working and walked over to greet the stranger. The man said, **“Hello, I am looking for a new town to settle down and make my home in. Would this town be a good place to make my home?”** The farmer responded, **“Well, what was the town you came from like?”**

**“My old town was not very good. The people there were very selfish and unkind. They said bad things about each other. They didn’t help each other. They were not very nice. I was glad to get out of there.”** “I see,” said the farmer. **“Well, I am afraid that this town is just like that too. No use settling here.** Then pointing down the road, he said, **“Goodbye. Have a good day.”**

Before long, another stranger came walking down that road and the farmer again stopped to visit with him. **“Hello, I’m looking for a new town to settle down and make my home in. Would this town be a good place to make my home?”** The farmer responded, **“Well, what was the town you came from like?”**

**“It was wonderful. The people there were very generous and kind. They complimented each other. They helped each other. They were very nice. I was sorry to have to leave there.”** “I see,” said the farmer. **“This town is just like that, lots of wonderful people doing lots of wonderful things. This would be a good place for you to settle. Welcome home!”**

Wow, what happened? Wasn’t the farmer talking about the same town? A bad town or a good town? Which is it? A lot of times, kids, you **find just what you are looking for**. If you look for the good in a town, you will find it. If you look for the bad in a town, you will find it. The same is true for **people**. The same is true for **our church**. If you come here **looking for good things to happen, for Jesus to speak to you, for the people to love and care for you** – that is what you will find.

Is this a good church or a bad church? **You help to make this church what it is.** God help us to be a **good church, faith family and helpers of Jesus.** Amen.

### **ADULT MESSAGE**

When Lutherans read the Bible, we are always looking for:

1. What is the **basic truth** this passage of scripture teaches?
2. What is the **most hopeful word/promise** this passage contains?

The basic truth **often** spells out **what God expects** from us or from our world. The most hopeful word/promise is **always** about **what God has done, is doing or will be doing** for our lives and world. **And** we read scripture expecting Jesus will come as **Living Word** and **speak to each of us** the words we most need to hear that day.

Today's text comes from the ancient prophet, **Micah**. Hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, Micah speaks to God's people of Judah. Their political and religious leaders have lied and cheated to enrich themselves at the expense of the average citizen, the poor, the widows and orphans. The enemy army surrounds their capital city, Jerusalem. The leaders and maybe most of the people, have long since stopped looking to God for guidance, help or hope. Now, in Micah, one good king, **Hezekiah**, and one good prophet, **Micah**, call the people to turn back and seek God's help and deliverance. How can they **reconnect with God**?

They offered typical **religious responses** – Come to worship with offerings of calves, thousands of rams, tens of thousands of rivers of oil. **“Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”**

They offered sacrifices far beyond their ability. God doesn't want people to sacrifice children. God wants to give life to their children. God doesn't need our little offerings. God wants our lives. **If God has our lives, God has everything.**

Here comes the **basic truth** in this text. The truth of this passage has **always been a part of God's expectation** of God's people. **“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”** Guess what, that's **not what their world looked like**. Justice, love kindness, walk humbly with our God – **is that what our world looks like today**? Powerful interests calling all

the shots, self-centered lives and decisions, prejudice, hatred, shootings, bombings, refugees, homeless veterans, chemical sniffing killers, climate change denied so that more money can be made. . . Is your life about seeking justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God? My own life often falls far short of God's expectations for God's people. I think too much about me and too little about others. What hope is there for our world? Why doesn't God give up on us?

Is there any **good news, a hopeful word/promise** in this ancient text from Micah? It sounds a little bit like "Christmas." Here it is, "**But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace."**

Starting from ordinary parents, in a little, backwoods town, a new king would come to save God's people. Somehow, after Micah wrote his prophecy, the enemy king packed up his army and went home. But more enemy armies have marched, more evil kings have come to power and more people have experienced injustice, neglect and hatred over the centuries still. . . **What is God's answer?**

**Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.** God still expects us to live **God-pleasing, hopeful, servant lives.** The new king, Jesus, spelled these Godly expectations out like this:

1. Love your enemy.
2. Feed the hungry.
3. Visit the sick.
4. Welcome the stranger.
5. Forgive one another an infinite number of times.
6. Share the Good News of God's great love for all people.

These are **God's expectations** of us. **But** the new king, Jesus, also brought a **Godly gift**. "**This is my body given for you and for all people for the forgiveness**

of sins.” Then Jesus spread his arms and breathed his last. Until three days later. Until today. Then Jesus **came back to give life and hope to every person.**

**What is the basic truth in Micah?** Take good care of this world and of your neighbor. **What is the good news or hopeful word/promise in Micah?** I will love and take care of you and I will help you to love and care for the world and neighbor. Until the last day when there will only be **peace** for you, for all nations, for all of eternity.

God **gives us the promise** of God’s new world and then **invites us to walk with God in it.** **Which world** do you want to live in? The **dog eats dog world?** Or, the **God loves and cares for us all world?** Thanks for the new king, Jesus, Lord. I want to live with you, in your kingdom, now and forever, Lord. And please help me to **seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you.** Not because I **have to**, but because I **want to.** Because **you want me to.** Thanks be to God. Amen.