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HCC Sermon
Micah 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: New York Times asked Evan Williams: How is the internet going?
2. Need: When will there be peace?
3. Subject: How do we find this peace?
4. Text: Micah 4:1-5
5. Preview: From whom do we find instruction for peace? Why do these instructions result in peace? How do we pursue peace?

BODY

- I. Instruction for peace comes from God (4:1-2)
 - A. Why can't human beings provide instructions for peace?
 - B. Micah foresees a day when the pagan nations will go to God for instruction (Micah 4:1-2)
 1. Micah describes the preeminence of the mountain of God (Micah 4:1)
 2. Micah depicts the various nations going to the mountain to receive instruction (Micah 4:2)
 - C. The picture of people going to God for instruction occurs throughout the Bible (Exodus 19; Matt 5-7)
 1. Israel went to mount Sinai to receive the law.
 2. The disciples went to Jesus to receive kingdom instruction.
 - D. Go to God for instruction (Col 3:16; Eph 2:21)
 1. Go to the Bible (Col 3:16)
 2. Go to the Spirit (Eph 2:21)
- II. God's instruction leads to peace because it acknowledges his authority (4:3-4)
 - A. Micah foresees a day when the nations will recognize the Lord's rule and power to enforce his rule resulting in peace (4:3-4)
 1. God will rule the nations (4:3)
 2. God serves as enforcer (4:4)
 3. It's interesting to think that there is a statue with the phrase: "We shall beat our swords into plowshares" in front of the UN building in NY.
 4. Micah foresees a day when weapons used for war: swords and spears will be transformed into farming tools.
 5. After G. Douglas MacArthur conquered and secured the Indonesian Island Biak, a chaplain named Leon Maltby arrived to minister to the troops.
 - B. When God's word is followed, peace follows
 1. God promised peace to Israel if it followed the law (Lev 26:3-4)
 2. God brought peace to believers in Christ (Eph 2:14)
 3. Have you experienced peace with God?
 4. If there's a place where peace exists, it should be the church
 - C. Peace begins with acknowledging God's rule.

1. It begins with humility (Jas 4:10).
 2. Ask God for help (Jas 1:5)
- III. Live according to God's instruction (4:5)
- A. The remnant pledges to live according to God's instruction (4:5).
 - B. God's people living according to his instructions piques the interests of others
 1. God intended Israel to attract others to him (Exod 19)
 2. Jesus intends the church to attract others to him (Matt 5:13-16)
 - C. Live according to his instruction
 1. The church is a trailer of coming attractions
 2. The church should seek the flourishing of their communities

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: Instruction for peace comes from God. God's instruction leads to peace because it acknowledges his authority. Live according to God's instruction.
2. Closing Image: On Dec 4, 2017 musicians gathered together in Philadelphia to perform David Lang's "Symphony for a Broken Orchestra".

MANUSCRIPT

Evan Williams, a founder of Twitter and co-creator of Blogger dreamed of setting people free to express their emotions and opinions on the internet. A New York Times article in 2017 asked him: “How is that going?”

Williams responded: “I think the internet is broken” The article goes on to say that Williams had believed this for a few years and things on the internet were getting worse.

Why would Williams say that the internet is broken? The article provided this explanation: People are using Facebook to showcase suicide, beatings, and murder in real time. Twitter is a hive of trolling and abuse that it seems unable to stop. Fake news, whether created for ideology or profit runs rampant. Four out of ten adult internet users said in a pew survey that they had been harassed online. And all this happened before the presidential campaign in 2016 heated up.

Williams confesses: “I thought once everybody could speak freely and exchange information and ideas, the world is automatically going to be a better place... I was wrong.”

When I read this article, I thought about how the internet exposes the brokenness within our society. It revealed the conflict, the fighting, and the nastiness. The civil unrest following the death of George Floyd has led to a rise tensions on various levels. The coronavirus pandemic prompted anger toward the government for shutting down parts of society and failing to do more. This has led to people losing their jobs and wondering how to make ends meet. The natural disasters such as the wildfires in California and Hurricane Sally have devastated communities. One might say that morale has declined considerably.

It causes you to wonder: “When will there be peace?” I’m not just talking about the absence of conflict. I’m referring to a harmony that leads to flourishing and delight. The Bible calls this peace Shalom. Pastor Tim Keller compares shalom to a piece of fabric. If you throw a thousand threads on a table, they wouldn’t be a fabric. They would just be threads. The threads become fabric when all they have been woven over, under, around, and through one another. As the threads become interdependent, they become stronger, and more beautiful. God created the world comprised of all these various elements: governments, schools, businesses, infrastructure, and etc. to create something harmonious and beautiful.

Yet with all the negativity in the world, peace or shalom seems like a distant dream. The inhabitants of Judah probably felt the same way thousands of years ago when the prophet Micah preached to them. He pointed to the brokenness of their community. People had abandoned the worship of God for idols. Rich landowners stole inheritances from the poor. The prophets preached false messages promising prosperity and omitting judgment. The leaders of Judah treated people as ingredients for hot pot. None could find justice in the courts due to corruption. Micah warned Judah that God would level the city of Jerusalem for all this moral decay.

Yet like a flicker of candlelight in darkness, Micah provides a message of hope. He sees a day when peace will be found. **How do we find this peace? How do we experience this shalom? Let’s see what Micah says in Micah, chapter 4. Micah, chapter 4.**

In this text, Micah answers three questions. **First, from whom do we find instructions for peace? Second, why do these instructions result in peace? Third, how do we pursue peace?**

First question, from whom do we find instructions for peace? **Instructions for peace comes from God.** God created all things visible and invisible. He designed things to work a certain way. If God crafted the world, then he knows how each element of creation should work together to bring about peace. The blueprint for peace comes from the divine architect. **Instructions for peace comes from God.**

Now you may ask: “Why can’t human beings provide instructions for peace?” We may come up with wonderful theories in how to create flourishing societies and relationships. Yet we are a selfish people, when someone looks out for their personal interests rather than the interests of others, it leads to conflict. If people could be charitable to one another without selfish motivation, then it could work. But we all know that there’s a bit of darkness in every one of us. This is why we need instruction from God. For God alone is good and there exists no selfishness in him.

Micah foresees a day when all the pagan nations will go to God for instruction. Where do the nations go to meet with God? The mountain of God. **Micah describes the preeminence of the mountain of God.** Micah describes it this way in verse 1: *“It shall come in the later 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.”*

Why is the mountain mentioned so many times? Remember that chapter 3 of Micah ends with the mountain of Jerusalem leveled. From the rubble, the mountain rises like a phoenix. The height of the mountain symbolizes God’s victory over chaos and that God still dwelt with his people. The temple in Jerusalem sits at the highest point of Jerusalem to remind its inhabitants that God watches over them.

Next, **Micah depicts the various nations going to the mountain to receive instruction.**

Verse two describes the scene: *“and many nations shall come, and say, “Come, let us go 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.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”* It is implied from this verse that the nations had given up trying to accomplish peace on their own. They may have said to themselves: “Our idolatry has led to conflict and disarray in our nations. Let’s go to the God of Israel and see how we may live according to his plan.”

The picture of people going to God for instruction occurs throughout the Bible. When Moses led Israel out of Egypt, he brought them to Mount Sinai to receive instruction from the LORD. This instruction in the form of the law outlined how Israel would be a nation to bring shalom or peace to themselves and to their neighbors. **The disciples in the New Testament also received instruction about how to live as members of the Kingdom of God from Jesus on a mount.** That’s why that message is called: “Sermon on the Mount.” After Jesus’ resurrection, he commissions his disciples including us to bring this instruction to the world (Matt 28:18-20).

If instructions for peace come from God, then we ought to go to God for instruction.

Does this mean that we need to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem? No. **Paul writes that as believers we ought to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly** (Col 3:16). To receive the instruction of God requires us to saturate our lives with it so that affects every aspect of our beings so that we teach, instruct, and sing God’s instruction. **Paul also writes that believers become a temple for the Holy Spirit** (Eph. 2:21). The Spirit of God that dwelt in the tabernacle

and in the temple dwells in you as well. As he prompts you and brings God's instruction to your mind receive it.

This then prompts the second question: "Why do these instructions result in peace?"

God's instruction leads to peace because it acknowledges his rule. When you obey someone's instructions, you recognize their authority and follow. If your professor instructs you on how to solve a problem, then you follow his instruction step by step. If a YouTube video gives you expert advice on how to patch a leak, you follow their instructions. **God's instruction leads to peace because it acknowledges his rule.**

Micah foresees a day when the nations will recognize the Lord's rule and power to enforce his rule resulting in peace. Look with me at verse 3: *"He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords in to plowshares, and their spears in to pruning hook; nation 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."*

From verse 3, we see that **God will rule the nations.** Micah uses the word: judge. When we heard the word: judge we think of a person wearing a black robe interpreting the law and rendering a sentence. Micah had a broader picture for the word: judge. There was a time in Israel's history, when judges ruled over it. Micah depicts God as a judge but as a judge who rules over the nations.

God also serves as enforcer. Look at how Micah describes God as the LORD of hosts in verse 4. This means that God is not only the king who renders decisions, but he is also the commander-in-chief of the heavenly armies. He is able to enforce his decisions.

It's interesting to think that there is a statue with the phrase: we shall beat our swords into plowshares in front of the UN building in New York. It surprised me to discover that the Soviet Union had gifted it to the UN in 1959. The quote on the statue lacks the first half of verse 3: "He shall judge between many peoples" referring to God. Maybe the UN believes that through its work, it is able to establish lasting peace in the world. Yet we know that conflicts have still arisen despite the mission of the UN to preserve peace. As believers we recognize that no one can establish lasting peace apart from God.

Micah foresees a day when weapons used for war: swords and spears will be transformed into farming tools. War no longer exists, and such weapons are no longer necessary. Each person will tend to his own farm and sit under their vine or fig tree. This image is drawn from the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4:25). There will be enough to eat and there is no need for conflict. There is peace.

It reminds me of a story that occurred back in World War II. **After General Douglas MacArthur conquered and secured the Indonesian island Biak, a chaplain named Leon Maltby, arrived to minister to the troops.** But resources were scant. He built a chapel with a floor of packed coral and with a yellow parachute for a roof.

He wanted to serve communion but had no cups to serve them with. He found some unused 50 caliber bullets. He removed the lead, gun powder, and firing caps. He welded and pressed them into the right shape and shined them. It took 2 hours to complete each cup. He created 80 cups.

After the end of the war in 1945, Maltby was the first protestant chaplain to enter Japan. He became good friends with a Japanese pastor and use that communion set to serve

communion with him. Bullets that could have killed lives were shared by former enemies to remember Christ's blood shed for them. This set is on display at the Veteran's Museum in Daytona with the sign: "The pastor clearly understood the significance of instruments of death becoming a symbol for eternal life."

What happens when people follow God's word? **When God's word is followed, peace follows.** God's word in the Law, wisdom literature, and prophets describe how he entered into relationship with Israel. The law gave instruction on how sin which separated God and Israel was to be dealt with through the sacrificial system. God also instructed Israel in how it would interact with one another and their neighbors. If Israel obeyed the law and submitted to God's rule, then they would have experienced peace or shalom (Lev 26:3-4). But Israel failed to live up to the covenant leading to their exile.

As believers, we recognize that we were once enemies of God due to sin. **But through faith in Christ, we now have peace with God.** When we become Christ followers, we also join a church composed of people from different backgrounds. Despite our differences, we have been united in Christ. Paul talks about the peace that we have received in Christ leads to peace with one another (Col 3:15).

Have you experienced this peace with God? Or are you conflicted? I would invite you to think: "What is holding you back?" Have you experienced peace in your relationship with others? If not, then acknowledge your need for help. For Christ alone can supply you the resources that you need to experience harmony in your relationships with others.

If there is a place where peace exists, then it should exist in the church. Yet we all know that conflict occurs regularly in the church. Unresolved conflicts linger. Gossip and slander

make their rounds. People tease others. Words misunderstood lead to grudges. If we with the resources of God cannot strive for shalom, then what makes us think that by ourselves we can bring peace to our communities.

Where does peace begin? **Peace begins with acknowledging God's rule.** It begins with submission to God's authority. **To do this requires humility.** Recall that in the book of James, James traces the source of conflicts to our desires that we wish to fulfil with the ways of the world rather than the ways of God (Jas 4:1-4). Hence, we need to humble ourselves and live according to God's design trusting that it is best and leads to peace (Jas 4:10).

What happens if we have a hard time believing that God's design for your life leads to peace? Pray. **Ask God for help.** Does James not say that if you lack wisdom, then you should ask God who gives wisdom generously to all who ask (Jas 1:5).

Let's move to our last question. How do we pursue peace?

Live according to God's instruction. By the power of the Spirit, pursue peace according to God's word with others in the church and outside of the church. Allow God's instruction to shape and direct your life. **Live according to God's instruction.**

Micah records the response of the remnant in Judah as they hear God's promise of future peace. The remnant pledges to live according to God's instruction. Verse 5 says: *"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."*

Despite the societal chaos in Judah, those faithful to God reaffirm their devotion to God by living according to his ways. The remnant knows that God will establish his peace on earth. As they wait, they will live their lives set apart from the idolatrous practices occurring around

them. Their set apart living and devotion to God will draw others into their community so that they too will experience the peace that surpasses understanding.

God's people living according to his instructions piques the interests of others. When God establishes the nation of Israel at mount Sinai in Exodus 19, he intended Israel to attract others to come and see his goodness. When other nations see the blessing of Israel, it creates curiosity. They come to Israel to figure out why do their crops always produce a bountiful harvest? Why do the people in Israel have no lack? Why do people treat other justly and fairly? When foreigners ask Israel these questions, they point to God for their blessing. Shalom or peace comes from God. Jesus intended for his followers to attract others to him as well. When followers of Christ live according to his kingdom instruction, he compares them to salt and light in the world. When the world sees the good work of his people, they will give glory to God.

Live according to God's instruction. What does this look like? If you have conflict with someone at church, then seek to clear the air. Make sure that when you come to worship God and others, that there are no outstanding grudges. If someone has wronged you, then forgive them. For God has forgiven your sins. Give credit where credit where it is due. If someone helps you at home, school, or work make sure that you acknowledge their help instead of claiming credit yourself. If you encounter someone different than you at church, then don't withdraw. Engage them. Learn their story. Christ has given his life to save you and those different than you. **The church is supposed to serve as a trailer of coming attractions in the kingdom.** One aspect that it should model is peace and flourishing.

The church should also seek the peace and flourishing of our communities. In the past, churches began Sunday schools to teach kids how to read. Some churches established

orphanages to care for orphans in their communities. Some have ministered to those in prison. Others have developed partnership programs with schools to care for families in the community. When we live according to God's instruction, it brings peace to the church and its communities.

From whom do we receive instruction for peace? Instruction for peace comes from God. Why do these instructions result in peace? God's instruction leads to peace because it acknowledges his authority. How do we pursue peace? Live according to God's instruction.

On Dec 4, 2017, 400 musicians gathered together in Philadelphia to perform David Lang's "Symphony for a Broken Orchestra". The orchestra consisted of amateurs, professionals, and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The youngest member was a 9-year old cellist. The oldest was an 82-year old oboist. One could describe it as a motley orchestra.

I also forget to mention their odd assortment of broken instruments. One had a trumpet held together with blue painters' tape. One violin lacked an A-string. One person's bow had lost most of its hair. One member carried a cello in multiple pieces. You see, the government had cut funding to the music program in public schools, so the instruments fell into disrepair.

The music began with most instruments silent. Yet measure by measure, instruments began to join in. The trumpet incapable of producing a sound provided a rhythm by tapping the keys. A cellist produced sounds from their broken cello by turning a stringless peg. Eventually, the whole orchestra roared to life. Some musicians struggled. A French horn player fumbled his mouthpiece. A clarinet player squeaked and squawked. But together, the orchestra produced a rich harmony. As the piece wound down, each section made its exit until only the squeal of a clarinet remained.

This motley orchestra reminds me of the church. On our own we have little to contribute. But each member of the church contributes its voice to the symphony. Some clap and squeak, but all the voices harmonize because of the master composer – Jesus Christ. For though his death and resurrection, he has brought peace to the lost so that the tune of the of the church would invite others to join its song. And we await the day when the full peace of God comes on this earth at Jesus's return.