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Micah 5

God of Justice:
The Shepherd King

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King Hezekiah faced some serious **obstacles** in his lifetime. During his lifetime the **Assyrian** army, a military force known for their brutality and strength, ransacked **Judah** and gathered right outside **Jerusalem's walls**. The king of Assyria, **Sennacherib**, sent his messenger to mock Hezekiah and the God of Israel (Isa 36:1-2). We see this in verse 1.

Micah 5:1

Marshal your troops now, city of troops,
for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel's ruler
on the cheek with a rod. (NIV®)

King Hezekiah was facing some serious **personal obstacles**. He might **lose** his **kingdom**, his **warriors** might **abandon** him, he might **die**. Likewise, many of us are facing personal obstacles. "Everyone is going through something." Maybe your obstacle is **financial**. You don't have a well-paying job or your bills are mounting. Or it could be your **schedule**. There's just not enough **time** in the day. You're **too busy**. You don't get to relax or be with family or friends. Maybe it's deeper. You're depressed, **melancholy**. **Nothing good** is happening in your own life and all you hear is **bad news**. We all face personal obstacles.

The obstacles Hezekiah faced were **personal** but they were also **corporate**. It wasn't just him who faced the Assyrians, but **all the people**. It wasn't just him who might die. It was all of Judah. The whole **community** was at risk. **Jerusalem** means **city of peace** but the whole city is facing **annihilation** and **exile**. They're probably going to **die** or **starve** and the enemy is telling them their God won't deliver them (Isa 36:14-15).

If they were facing obstacles as the **people of Judah** what sort of obstacles are we facing as the **people of Cornerstone**? You know what the **big-three problems** are that churches face and no one really wants to hear a sermon on? Money, attendance, and evangelism.

- **Money** - Although our church is incredibly **generous** we are still facing a **budget shortfall** of almost **\$18,000** going into next fiscal year. The finance team has said we need to cut next year's budget but they're not sure what to cut. This is a big obstacle to doing the ministry we want to do.
- **Attendance** - I'm going to be honest with you all. Attendance is terrible. When we first launched **80** people felt like a lot. Now **55** feels like a lot. Last year from **July** through **June** our average attendance was **59** people at a worship service. So far this year we are averaging **49**, a drop of **10**.
- **Evangelism** - Our church is mostly made up of **transplants**, believers from **other churches**. We're not seeing new people come to know Christ like we had hoped. The aim was never to be a **small church** but to grow this church by reaching the **unchurched**, people who don't know Jesus, but we're not there yet.

Instead of preaching **one** sermon on money, one on attendance, and one on evangelism, I'm cramming it all into one because these are the obstacles we are facing **corporately**. Let's **talk** about them. Let's **face** them. Let's find **solutions**. I believe we can find solutions by looking to **God's word**.

We're looking at the story of Micah. I think as we compare **our** obstacles (money, attendance, evangelism) to **theirs** (death, starvation, exile), it's fair to say our **situation** is looking **better** and **better**. Their problems are more serious than ours, but that means **whatever solution Micah gave them** should work just as well for us. Whatever they look to for hope and deliverance **should be the exact same thing** we look to. **How** they responded and how we "**can**" (keyword) respond influences "if" we will overcome our obstacles.

Before we **jump into** our first point one word of **caution**. A church that is **packed** every week, has lots of **baptisms**, and is **flush** with **cash** isn't necessarily a success in God's eyes. But a lack of money, attendance, and conversions isn't a sign of healthy church either. However, my sermon **isn't really about** those things. It's about how we **respond** when we face challenges. It's about **focusing** on the right things. See our first response starts with our **eyesight**.

Eyes - Set your eyes on Jesus. (v1-6)

First, set your eyes on Jesus. What does Micah do when the people of Judah are facing the destruction of their **temple** (chapter 2) and the promise of **exile** in Babylon (chapter 4)? He speaks to them of a **deliverer**.

Micah 5:2

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times." (NIV®)

He tells them that out of the **smallest** and most **insignificant** of towns, a town that doesn't even make the map (kind of like **Forge Village** or **Graniteville**), a deliverer is going to come. King **David**, the greatest king of Israel, came from Bethlehem, but not much has come from there since (1 Sam 16:1). But our God loves to use the **weak** and the **small** to overcome the big and the strong.

Micah 5:4

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord.
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth. (NIV®)

Micah is trying to get the people of Judah and Jerusalem to set their eyes not on Assyria, or king Hezekiah who isn't **strong** or **capable** enough, but on a coming **Shepherd King**. Today I'm **inviting** you to take your **eyesight off** whatever you're going through **personally** and what we're going through **corporately** and begin to refocus on Jesus, not because this will make all our problems **vanish** but because we will view them with the **right perspective** as we **gaze first** at **Christ's power, glory, grace, and goodness**.

When the people of Judah heard this prophecy they wouldn't have known to look to Jesus, but they would have known to look to a **special future figure**, the Messiah. The Messiah would have sounded **super mysterious** to them. The Messiah is a shepherd, but he's from **old**, which means he's **God** (v2). And yet he's also human because he has to trust the Lord for **his strength** (v4) and he will be **born** in Bethlehem (v2). They had to look to Jesus through a **veil**, but we can see him clearly because we have the New Testament and can see exactly how he is both God and man. But clarity only does us only **so much good**. We have to look at him and place our hope in him. We have to **intentionally** choose to trust him most. We have to look to our

Shepherd. We have to get Jesus in our eyes. As Christians we are to be **people of hope**. We can't live **defeated** lives because Jesus has won the **victory** and we want people to **see our hope** in him.

It can be really bad if you get the wrong thing in your eyes. A **couple months ago** I was working in my basement when a **speck of sawdust** fell from my ceiling and scratched the **white** part of my eye. It **really hurt**. I put my eye in **water** and sat in a **dark room** but it still **stung**. It made it hard to **function**. If we get the **wrong things in our eyes** we're not going to be able to function as **God intends**.

Do you know why church attendance matters? Because every week it helps you **refocus on Jesus**. Do you know why giving matters? Because **Matthew 6:21** tells us that where our **treasure** is that's where our **heart** is too. We want to set our hearts on Jesus. Do you know why **evangelism** matters? Because we can only do it successfully if we're **thinking more** about **Jesus** than we are ourselves. Let's take a **personal** and **corporate** trip to the **eye doctor**. **What** are you setting your eyes on? What are you spending your money on? Where are you spending your time? What do you tell people about easily? *We need to set our eyes on Jesus*. If we do, this is the promise.

Micah 5:5

And he will be our peace
when the Assyrians invade our land
and march through our fortresses.
We will raise against them seven shepherds,
even eight commanders, (NIV®)

What does this verse say? It says that the people of Judah and the people of Cornerstone have a Shepherd King (Jesus) and "he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land..." In other words, when we're facing **obstacles** or **tough circumstances** Jesus can give us **peace**. He's **enough**.

Verse 3 says, "and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites." It's a **prophecy** of a **restored community**. We have to face our problems and challenges, whether they're personal because you're going through something, or they're corporate because we're all in it, **together**. As a **community** ("unity") we need to set our eyes on Jesus, encouraging each other **individually** and **together** when the hard times come.

We have **two opportunities** to corporately set our eyes on Jesus as a **community**. The first is tomorrow night's **time of worship**. In that time we can let go of thinking about our personal problems and our church's obstacles and **just worship Jesus**. The second opportunity comes from the Elders. They have asked me to preach a sermon on **prayer** and **fasting** in March. This came about because the **Outreach Ministry Team** came to the Elders and requested us to set aside time as a whole church to pray and fast and to seek the **Lord's direction** as a church together. I think this is **exactly** what we need. We need to come together as a community and **set our eyes on Jesus** through prayer, through taking a break from some of those other things we look to comfort us (like **social media**, or **food**, or **desserts**, or **tv**, or **sports**, **business**, or **whatever**), and just ask for **more of Jesus**. The Outreach team is going to meet to discuss what exactly this could look like but would you **begin to think and pray** about what the Lord might ask you to **fast from** so that you can spend more time praying and focusing on him? *Let's set our eyes on Jesus together as a church*.

In the first 6 verses of Micah 5 the prophet Micah says a **shepherd king** will come who will deliver them. He will be from the least of towns but he will overcome with the strength of God. He will bring **peace** despite their **circumstances**, despite Assyria. This brings us to our **second response** to our obstacles, our feet.

Feet - Take the gospel out. (v7-9)

We walk our feet outside to share the gospel.

Micah 5:7

The remnant of Jacob will be
in the midst of many peoples
like dew from the Lord,
like showers on the grass,
which do not wait for anyone
or depend on man. (NIV®)

The **remnant**, which are the people God has saved by his grace, are to be out “in the **midst** of many peoples.” Micah is talking about us now. We’re to be **out and in the world**. When we encounter **resistance** or **hardship**, what’s a natural response? **Withdrawal** and **hide**. But as the church, we can’t do that. Why? Because we’re to **go out** into the world and be like “**dew from the Lord**” and “like **showers on the grass**” (v7). What do you feel when you walk through **dewy grass** and the **sunlight** is hitting it and there’s a **morning breeze**? You feel **refreshed** and **awakened**. We refresh and bless the world.

As Christians, God calls us to go out into this world and be a **blessing with the gospel** (Gen 12:2-3). The next two verses (v8-9) talk about a “**young lion**” in rather graphic terms and triumphing over enemies, but those are ways of describing our **complete victory**. As Christians, we **will** achieve victory as we **go out** into our world and bless others with the gospel. It’s **as** we are in the **midst of people**, not as we are **separate**, that we **overcome our obstacles**. It’s **as we go, not as we stay**, that we bless the world.

You can’t be a **morning dew** if you stay **indoors**. We have to get outside and go. This is why **frontline ministry** is so important because you’re out in your normal world being **an agent** for Christ. But we also need to think of other ways that we as a church can get **outside our building**, **serve our community**, and **share the gospel**. Let’s recapture **God’s vision** that Romans captures so well.

Romans 10:14-15

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?
15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (NIV®)

I want to **challenge** every single person in this room to walk outside of this church tonight and sometime this week to **invite someone** you know who doesn’t know Jesus to either the **game night** or **Christianity Explored**. I admit neither of these ministries are **truly outside** our church but they are a **starting point**. We made invite cards to Christianity Explored so that you would have something to hand them. Lord willing we will think of **other opportunities** to take the gospel **out into our world**, both on our **frontlines**, and as a **church**. Let’s solve our **evangelism obstacle**. *Let’s use our feet to walk the gospel out.*

I don’t know if the people in Micah’s day **wanted** this part. They wanted God to deliver them, but on **their terms**.¹ They wanted to stay **safe in Jerusalem**. But that’s not what the Shepherd King said he would do. **Shepherds move their flocks** from **one field** to the **next**. If sheep **stay** in one field **too long** they can **overgraze** and **hurt themselves**.² Do we want our **pasture** more or our **shepherd** more? We’ve talked about directing our eyes and feet towards Jesus, but there’s one more response—what we do with our hearts.

Heart - Turn your heart from its idols. (v10-15)

¹ Stephen Um in Micah for You makes a similar point.

² “Overgrazing and undergrazing pastures is detrimental to plant and animal health, as well as soil and water quality.” Grazing management. Sheep 201. <http://www.sheep101.info/201/grazingsystems.html> Accessed Feb 7, 2019.

We need to turn our hearts to Jesus by repenting of any **sins** we may be holding onto. Look at how the Lord systematically dismantles the idols of king Hezekiah and Judah.

- You trusted in **horses** and **chariots** (verse 10), I'll destroy them.
- You trusted in your **cities** and **strongholds** (verse 11), I'll destroy those too.
- You trusted in your **witchcraft** (verse 12) and your **idols** (verse 13), I will destroy them all.

If we are placing our trust in anything besides Jesus, our **money**, our **time**, new **conversions**, or a general feeling of **success**, those are **idols** and Christ will destroy them. He **loves** us too much to let us worship them. Maybe that's not you and you're worshipping something else—your career, your family, the Patriots—then let's all together **confess this sin corporately** and **receive Christ's forgiveness**. Let's ask us to change him so our hearts are **completely his**.

I've been reading *Micah for You* by **Stephen Um**, who is the Pastor of **Citylife Presbyterian Church** in **Boston**, and he turned my attention to a verse in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 33:12b

“Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long,
and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders.” (NIV®)

The picture we get here is that the Lord God is a **shepherd** who **carries weary lambs** on his shoulders. Are you **weary** of your **idols**? They **won't satisfy**. Our shepherd went to the **cross** to **lay down his life** for **lost lambs**. He shed his **blood** so that **spotted lambs** can become **white as snow**. He did this so that we could **find rest** between his **shoulders**. His shoulders **bore the cross** so that our shoulders don't have to. The solution to idolatry is not **trying harder** or **being better**, it's **crucifixion**—crucifixion of our **sins with Jesus** and **resurrection to new life** with him. Come Jesus, crucify our sins. Raise our hearts from the dead. Let this be our **prayer**...

“Help our eyes, feet, and hearts follow you Jesus.”

You know what **king Hezekiah** did when he faced **impossible odds**? Do you know what he did when the Assyrian army threatened to **destroy** him and **mocks** the one true God? He goes up to the **house** of the Lord, the **temple**, and he **prays** before the Lord (Isa 37:14-20). You know how God answers? Our God **strikes down 185,000 Assyrian** soldiers and **kills Sennacherib king of Assyria** (Isa 37:36-38). The victory is **complete** and it's **powerful** and it's a picture of the kind of **victory** we **can have through Jesus Christ**. If it's the Lord's will, we **can overcome** our **obstacles** as we set our eyes on Jesus, take the gospel out, and turn our hearts from their idols. *Help our eyes, feet, and hearts follow you Jesus. Amen.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes further endnotes and references. Click to listen to sermons or to read our story.