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 HCC Sermon
 Micah 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: Kim McClain, a research scientist, set out to discover why storms killed so many people.
2. Need: Ignoring warnings gets us into trouble. Warnings are meant to help us.
3. Subject: What does God's warning in Micah 2 teach us? [Remain faithful to God]
4. Text: Micah 2:1-13
5. Preview: We'll discover three ways to remain faithful to God.

BODY

- I. Treat others fairly (2:1-5)
 - A. We see this in Micah's warning to the rich landowners of Judah.
 - a. God warns them to stop scheming (2:1).
 - b. God warns them to stop taking the inheritance of others (2:2).
 - c. God warns them that He will take away their inheritance (2:3, 5)
 - B. God always warns his people to treat others fairly
 1. Hosea warns Israel that their dishonesty will lead to exile (Hosea 12:7-8)
 2. Jesus warns the Pharisees that their neglect of justice will lead to condemnation (Matt 23:23-27)
 - C. Treat others fairly.
 1. How do you treat others?
 2. How do you treat your brother?
 3. How do you treat your employee?
 4. How do you treat youth?
- II. Learn the entire counsel of God (2:6-11)
 - A. Micah warned the false prophets that their incomplete.
 - a. Theology determines practice.
 - b. Micah points out that false prophets' teaching has led to wicked practices.
 - c. God will drive these false teachers out.
 - d. Micah not only condemns these false teachers but also those who listen to him.
 - B. God sends spokesmen to correct false teaching
 1. God sent Elijah to remind Israel to worship God alone.
 2. God send Jesus to correct the teaching of the Pharisees
 - a. Jesus corrects a misunderstanding of the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8)
 - b. Jesus corrects a misunderstanding of purity (15:10-20)
 - C. Learn the entire counsel of God
 1. This principle informs our preaching philosophy at HCC
 2. Read through entire books of the Bible

- III. Wait for the King (2:12-13)
 - A. Micah anticipates God the shepherd king saving his remnant (2:12-13)
 - 1. Micah ends his first large warning with a message of hope
 - 2. God promises to regather his faithful followers while they're in exile (2:12)
 - 3. Micah goes on to explain how God will break down the walls holding Israel in exile so that they can go free (2:13).
 - B. God has always saved a remnant
 - 1. He saved Noah from the flood
 - 2. He saved Jacob's family from the famine.
 - 3. He saved the Jewish exiles from Babylon.
 - 4. God sent Jesus Christ to break us free not from physical walls but from the shackles of sin.
 - C. Wait for the King by remaining faithful
 - 1. When we think about waiting, it's not something we enjoy.
 - 2. Warn others of sin's consequences.
 - 3. Invite others to follow the King.
 - 4. Every time you take out a means of identification, I want you to remember you have a spiritual ID card.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Summary: Remain faithful to God by treating others fairly, heeding the entire counsel of God, and waiting for the king.
- 2. Closing Image: Tilly Smith, a 10-year old, and her family relaxed on a beach in Thailand for their first family vacation.

MANUSCRIPT

Kim McClain, a research scientist, set out to discover why storms killed so many people. She learned in her eight years of research that people failed to heed weather warnings. Why?

McClain dubbed this phenomena as “confirm the threat”. Even though people are on alert that their area is threatened, they think: It doesn’t necessarily mean that a tornado will hit their home. So they wait until things get close to make the call to leave. Often times a tornado touches down close to them before they decide to evacuate. But then it’s too late. It’s part of human nature to ignore such warnings to us until it’s too late.

Ignoring warnings gets us into trouble. If we ignore our fuel gauge indicator light warning us that our car is low on fuel, it may strand us on the side of the road. If we ignore the warning to avoid diving in the shallow end of the swimming pool, then we may hurt ourselves. If we ignore the warning to eat food before taking medicine, then it may upset our stomach.

Warnings are meant to help us. When the fuel gauge indicator light goes off, we should fill up on gas. When we avoid diving in a shallow pool, we protect our body from injury. When we eat food with our medicine, it allows the medicine to be effective. Heeding warnings benefit us.

This applies not only to warnings we find in our cars, swimming pools, or medicine, but it applies to spiritual warnings as well. If God warns us about something, then we should pay attention. What does God warn us about?

At HCC, we’ve started a series in the book of Micah. Recall that Micah’s ministry occurred when the nation of Israel had been split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Micah issues a series of warnings to the southern kingdom of Judah. We’ll look specifically at Micah 2. What does God’s warning in Micah 2 teach

us? God expects his people to remain faithful to him. In this text, we'll discover three ways to remain faithful to God.

If you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Micah 2. Micah, chapter 2.

What is the first way to remain faithful to God? **Treat others fairly.** God expects his people to treat all people alike. It doesn't matter if you're wealthy or poor, older or younger. God expects you to treat everyone with respect and care. **Treat others fairly.**

We see this in Micah's warning to the rich landowners of Judah. God warned them that if they continued to mistreat the poor landowners then they would lose their inheritance in God's land. These rich landowners stay awake at night thinking about how they might take away their neighbor's vineyard or orchard. Micah writes in verse 1: *"Woe to those devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance."*

I want to focus in on this last phrase: *"Oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance."* Note the word: oppress. The NIV renders the word: defraud. Micah has in mind a rich landowner, who may have given a loan this neighbor at a high interest rates. The neighbor has a bad harvest and defaults on his loan. Instead of the rich landowner working out a deal for his poor neighbor to pay back the debt, he seizes the land." Now Micah describes this land as an inheritance. According to Leviticus chapter 25, verse 23, the land belonged to God and he distributed it to the families of Israel. No Israelite could take family land. But these rich landowners didn't care what God's word said. They believed in the phrase: "might makes right".

The Lord warns these landowners that if they take away the inheritance of the fellow Israelites, then he would take away their inheritance as well. How will the LORD take away their inheritance? God will send upon them disaster in the form of the conquering Assyrians. Micah

writes in verse 3: *“Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.”*

The landowners will not lose their land temporarily. But they will lose it forever. This is why Micah writes in verse 5: *“Therefore you will have none to cast the line by lot in the assembly of the LORD”*. When it comes time for the LORD to redistribute the land, these wicked landowners will not receive an inheritance. What is the lesson that God wants these landowners to learn? Treat others fairly. Don’t extort. Don’t defraud. Don’t scheme. Treat others fairly.

God always warns his people to treat others fairly. God sends Hosea to warn the northern kingdom: I see what you’re doing in the marketplace. You’re using an dishonest scale. In the Ancient Near East, they didn’t use cash registers for transactions. They used the scale. But then they calibrated the scale so that they used false weights to mark up prices. If they continued such dishonest practices, then God would send them into exile.

Jesus warned the Pharisees that you may bring mint, dill, and cumin to the temple, but you’re neglecting justice. You don’t give widows a fair hearing in her day in court. You fail to pay fair wages to your workers. Woe would come upon them if they continued to treat others poorly.

How do you treat others? When your parents ask you to share a cookie with your brother, do you break it in half and take the bigger half? As an employer do you treat some employees better than others? Do you show favor to one child more than another? Do you assume because you are older, it gives you a right to look down on those younger than you? Treat others fairly. Treat them with love and concern. Don’t take advantage of others because of your position or influence.

What is the second way to remain faithful to God? **Learn the entire counsel of God.** Listen to everything that God has spoken. Don't listen to portions or fragments. The entire counsel of God must be studied, meditated upon, and learned. Otherwise, it is possible for someone to arrive at an incomplete understanding of God. A partial understanding of God leads to incorrect conclusions. It should be our lifelong pursuit to know God more. **Learn the entire counsel of God.**

Micah warns the false prophets that their teaching is incomplete. The false prophets believed that Micah's message of warning of condemnation failed to sync up with the passages in the OT describing God as loving. After all, didn't Moses write that God was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness? Didn't God turn Balaam cursing into blessing? Listen to the words of the false prophets as Micah records in verse 6: *"Do not preach" – thus they preach – one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us."* Should this be said, O House of Jacob? Has the LORD grown impatient? Are these his deeds?" How does Micah respond to their teaching? He writes in the latter half of verse 7: *"Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?"* Micah may have also said: "You forgot to continue reading Exodus, verse 34, verse 7. It says: "Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." He might have also said: "Have you forgotten the words of Deuteronomy that says God will bless Israel if it remains faithful to God, but if Israel is unfaithful then God bring about curse." (Deut 28).

Why does God care so much about having a right understanding of his character? Theology or the study of God determines practice. What you know of God determines what you do. Good theology leads to good practice. Bad theology leads to bad practice.

Micah points out that the false prophets' teaching has led to wicked practices. When the inhabitants of Judah should feel safe, their fellow countrymen ambush them to steal their cloak. Verse 8 says: *"But lately my people have risen up as an enemy; you strip the rich robe from those who pass by trustingly with no thought of war."* The wicked landowners steal homes from widows and leave orphans destitute. Verse 9 says: *"The women of my people you drive out from their delightful houses; from their young children you take away my splendor forever."*

What is Micah's message to these false teachers if they to teach this incomplete theology? Expulsion. God will drive these false teachers out just as he drove the Canaanites out for their uncleanness (Lev 18:24-28). Micah puts it this way: *"Arise and go for this is no place to rest, because of uncleanness that destroys with a grievous destruction"*.

Micah not only condemns these false teachers but also those who listen to them. He says that Judah desires messages of prosperity and absence of judgment. Micah writes in verse 11: *"If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, 'I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,' he would be the preacher for this people."* When does wine and strong drink flow? It flows when there's prosperity. Micah compares the prosperity message of the false prophets as all wind and have no substance.

God has always sent spokesmen to correct false teaching. God sent Elijah to confront Baal worship in the northern kingdom. Israel couldn't worship two gods. There's no room for syncretism. God also sent Jesus to correct the teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus corrected their misunderstanding of the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-8). For the Sabbath was not a means to demonstrate one's religiosity but designed for man to enjoy God's blessing. Jesus corrects a misunderstanding of purity (Matt 15:10-20). For God is more concerned about one's moral purity rather than ritual purity. [The Pharisees had a partial understanding of purity.]

What should be our response? Learn the entire counsel of God. We try to follow this principle at HCC by preaching through the entire books of the Bible. We cover different genres from epistles, narratives, to wisdom literature. When we had Sunday school, we taught through books of the Bible as well.

My encouragement to you would be to consider reading through entire books of the Bible. Instead of picking through random verses of the Bible, think about choosing a book of the Bible to study. If you feel even more ambitious, then you can think about memorizing an entire book of the Bible. Doing so gives you a more growing understanding of God.

What is the third way to remain faithful to God? **Wait for the king.** Be patient. For we are a people awaiting the return of the king. **Wait for the king.**

Micah ends his first large warning with a message of hope. We'll see this as a pattern throughout the book of Micah. After a message of warning or judgment, Micah provides a message of hope.

What is Micah's message of hope? **Micah anticipates God the shepherd king to save his remnant.** Although Micah issues this warning, he knows that Judah will not listen. God will send first the Assyrians to take away some of Judah. But Babylon will completely conquer Judah and take away its inhabitants. At that time, God's people will wonder: Has God completely abandoned us? What is God's reply? I have not forgotten you.

God promises to regather his faithful followers while they're in exile. God invokes the image of a sheep and shepherd to convey this message. Listen to what Micah says in verse 12: "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men." Why does God use the imagery of a shepherd? God has often described himself as a shepherd. Recall the words of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." Micah will use this image to

describe God two more times in this book (5:4; 7:14). Like a shepherd gathering his sheep in a fold. God will gather them together.

Micah goes on to explain how God will break down to walls holding Israel in exile so that they can go free. He probably has in mind the walls of Babylon that will come down so that the Israelites could return to the land of Israel. Micah wrote in verse 13: “He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD is at their head.”

When we survey the Bible, we’ll see that God has always saved a remnant. He saved Noah from the flood. He saved Jacob’s family from famine by sending them to Egypt. He also saves the Jewish exiles from captivity in Babylon.

But as Christians, we understand this even more. For we have not been delivered from an oppressive king of famine. God sent Jesus Christ to break us free not from physical walls but from the shackles of sin. He led us out of our bondage of sin through his death on the cross and resurrection.

Jesus now serves as the head of the church and king seated at the right hand of God the Father. While we have been delivered from the exile of sin, we still remain as sojourners on this earth. We are a people as Peter writes in his letter that we are passing through this land. We await the day when Jesus will return to establish his kingdom on earth.

When we think about waiting, it’s not something we enjoy. Waiting seems to be a passive activity. When I think about waiting, my mind imagines myself sitting in a waiting room waiting for a doctor. I thumb through a magazine or check my email on my phone to pass the time. This not what God means by waiting. God encourages us to wait by bring God’s peace to our communities.

How do we wait for the king faithfully? First we warn others of sin's consequences. Sin has consequences. It ruins relationships. When you discover that someone has lied to you, it takes time for trust to be rebuilt. But sin has eternal consequences as well because it separates us from God. Those who remain in sin will experience God's wrath after death. We are to warn people of sin's devastating effects.

Not only do we warn people of what awaits them after death if they remain in sin, but we also invite them to follow the king. We share with people that God has invited them to join his kingdom and to have relationship with him. But the cost of admission is faith in Christ's work on the cross and his resurrection that Jesus paid the price of your sin and confers on you his righteousness so that you can have relationship with him.

How might we remind ourselves that we are a people waiting? Every time you take out a means of identification: student ID, driver's license, passport, or work pass, I want you to remember you have a spiritual ID card that says: "Member of God's kingdom". Every time you whip out that ID, think about how you can act in accordance to your identity as a member of God's kingdom. You are awaiting a kingdom to come.

What does Micah's warning teach us? He teaches us to remain faithful by treating others fairly, learning the entire counsel of God, and waiting for the king.

Tilly Smith, a 10-year old, and her family relaxed on a beach in Thailand for their first family vacation. As her family walked down the beach, she noticed something about the water. The waves continued to go out but they never came back in. This prompted her to remember a video she watched in geography class about Tsunamis. A Tsunami was coming.

Tilly began to warn her family with passion and persistence that a Tsunami was coming. Now what would you do if your daughter begins to scream and shout louder and louder: "A Tsunami is coming."

I imagine that parents would try to calm her down and say: "Get a hold of yourself. This is inappropriate behavior." Tilly's dad took her back to the hotel room to calm her down. But Tilly would not be stopped, so she left the room to find her dad. Tilly found her dad sharing with a security guard that his daughter thinks that there's a Tsunami is coming. With this warning, the security guard shouted for everyone to get off the beach. Moments later, a Tsunami triggered by an earthquake in the Indian Ocean would sweep the beach. The tsunami killed an estimated 230,000 people. But not one person died on Tilly's beach.

What will our response be as we hear God' warning through the prophet Micah? Will we ignore it? Or will we listen?