

A 4Epiphany  Could fit A Proper 26 by shifting text to Micah 3.5-12	<b>Why Prophets are Cranky</b>  Micah 6.1-8  by Tim Isbell	Preached 2/3/2008
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Thesis: Prophets are cranky because they see the brokenness of the world through God's eyes; Micah's message to all is do right, love mercy, and walk humbly.

*(I know that I borrowed these concepts from another sermon, but I can't seem to find the source. I'm pretty sure it was John Ortberg when he was at Willow)*

## The Prophetic Gift

### Don't the prophets strike you as kind of angry and cranky?

*Amos 4:1 (NLT) 1 Listen to me, you fat cows living in Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, and who are always calling to your husbands, "Bring us another drink!"*

*Isaiah 1:13 (NLT) 13 Stop bringing me your meaningless gifts; the incense of your offerings disgusts me! As for your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath and your special days for fasting— they are all sinful and false. I want no more of your pious meetings.*

*Micah 3:1-3 (NLT) 1 I said, "Listen, you leaders of Israel! You are supposed to know right from wrong, <sup>2</sup> but you are the very ones who hate good and love evil. You skin my people alive and tear the flesh from their bones. <sup>3</sup> Yes, you eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin, and break their bones. You chop them up like meat for the cooking pot.*

*Hosea marries a prostitute to show how unfaithful the people have become.*

*Ezekiel eats food cooked over excrement to show people how rotten they are.*

*Jeremiah digs up a filthy buried undergarment to use as an object lesson.*

### Personally I prefer happy books, but ...

I don't want to get to heaven and have Micah walk up and say, "Well, how'd you like my book?" and have to reply, "I never actually read it." Or worse, "What's your name again? What book did you write?"

There's a reason God included 17 books of prophesy in the Bible.

And there's a reason for their crankiness.

***Imagine that you're listening to someone sing... Off key, and loud.***

If you're musically insensitive it may not matter. If the singer is your child you may even like it.

But if you have a musical ear, perfect pitch, then you know what the song is supposed to sound like! In this case, listening to off-key singing is like listening to fingernails on a chalkboard. After hours/days of it you'd get cranky, too.

***So what are the prophets getting so cranky about?***

The prophets always talk about injustice, poverty, violence, etc.

We know there's violence/poverty/injustice in the world, but as long as it is a distance away from our own life it doesn't bother us too much.

Certainly these bad things are not our fault. We didn't cause them. They don't result from our anger, or lack of love, or indifference

***Are these such a big deal to us?***

Well, they're a big deal to Jesus.

Scripture says every time a person is in prison and doesn't get visited, or somebody's hungry and doesn't get fed, or is naked and doesn't get clothed that Jesus suffers. He dies a little bit.

The big deal with prophets is that prophets feel what God feels, way more intensely than the rest of us,

Prophets have "perfect pitch" when it comes to injustice. So when they have to listen to the world sing off-key, they can't help but get cranky.

They are wired up to see and sense all this brokenness and all the effects of sin, and it crushes them.

So they just can't help but speak what God feels.

***Maybe the rest of us can live in ignorance and denial.***

Many of us get used to the 3 leftover containers sitting by church's back fence, the copier sitting over in the side of the worship center, the stains on the Worship Center carpet.

We see them every week and get used to them; so they don't bother us any more.

But a few of us can't stand these things. We just can't ignore them. The prophet can't like this with injustice. These things bug them constantly.

***Truth is: I need the prophets' messages to wake me up to what breaks God's heart.***

I need these prophets' voices to jar me into noticing sin that is around me – on TV, at the local shopping mall, when I exit the freeway and see a guy with a sign: "homeless, hungry."

## So how do we respond?

Some of us get paralyzed by the immensity of injustice. Should we just sit around doing nothing and feeling intensely guilty? Micah, an Old Testament prophet, sums up what God is looking for from his followers:

*Read Micah 6.6-8*

**Do right (do justice),**

### ***A missed opportunity***

The last thing LaShanda Calloway saw before she died was people literally stepping over her to continue shopping as if nothing had happened. Calloway had stopped to shop in a convenience store in Wichita, Kansas when she was stabbed in an altercation. As she lay dying, a surveillance camera recorded 5 people stepping over her to continue down the store's aisles. Only one stopped—to take a picture of Calloway with a cell phone camera.

5 people had a chance to do right ... none did. I had a chance last Thursday at that exit ramp ... didn't do it.

### ***Soldier gives blood***

In Iraq, the U.S. Triage facility was doing its best to save the lives of two Iraqi insurgents.

The U.S. medical team moved heaven and earth to save their lives. One insurgent, however, was not going to survive unless he got 30 pints of blood. The call went out for volunteer donors; minutes later, dozens of GIs had lined up.

At the head of the line was a battle-hardened soldier named Brian Suam. Asked if it mattered that his blood was going to an insurgent, he smiled and said no—"A human life is a human life."

***Micah, a prophet of God, says ... Do right somewhere this week.***

**... love mercy (love kindness),**

### ***Balloon stomp***

Robert Roberts writes about a 4th-grade class in which the teacher introduced a game called The Balloon Stomp. A balloon was tied to every child's ankle, and the object was to pop everybody else's balloon while protecting yours. The last person with an intact balloon would win. The concept: I win, you lose.

The 9-year-olds entered in vigorously. Battle was over quickly; only one balloon was still inflated. Its owner was the most unpopular kid in the room.

A second class came later that day to play the same game— developmentally disabled children. The Balloon Stomp proceeded quite differently. The only idea they grasped was that the balloons were supposed to be popped. But instead of fighting each other off, the children got the idea that they were supposed to help one another pop balloons. They

formed a kind of balloon-stomp co-op.

One little girl knelt down and held her balloon carefully in place—like for a field goal—a little boy stomped it flat, then knelt down and held his balloon still for her.

On and on it went, all the children helping one another in the great stomp. When the last balloon was popped, everybody cheered—and everybody won.

### ***Shoeshine***

While attending seminary in Chicago, campus housing was not available for my wife and me, so we ended up renting an apartment around the corner on fashionable Oak Street. One morning I noticed Shoo, the local shoeshine man. Like a barker at a carnival, he would offer to shine the shoes (for \$) of passersby during the early morning rush.

One day a stretch limo pulled up in front of Shoo, and out stepped a gentleman who was dressed like a GQ cover. Rather than asking for a shoeshine, he sat Shoo down and polished his scuffed and tattered shoes. When finished, he handed Shoo a tip—a \$100 bill—then returned to his waiting vehicle, never saying a word.

When I returned home that evening, my wife asked how my day at school had gone. I explained that on my way to class to learn about Jesus, I saw someone who acted a whole lot like Jesus. To this day I cannot remember what I learned in my theology classes that particular day, but it is hard to forget the lesson I learned at the corner of Oak and Rush from Shoo and the man who acted like Jesus.

***Micah, a prophet of God, says shine someone's shoes this week. Do kindness, extend some mercy.***

**... walk humbly with God (before God).**

### ***Wade Boggs***

Former Boston Red Sox Hall-of-Fame third baseman Wade Boggs used to hate going to Yankee Stadium. Not because of the Yankees because of 1 fan.

The guy had a box seat close to the field, and when the Red Sox were in town he would torment Boggs by shouting obscenities and insults. It's hard to imagine one fan getting under a player's skin, but apparently, this guy had the recipe.

One day before the game, as Boggs was warming up. The fan began his typical routine, yelling, "Boggs, you stink" and variations on that theme. Boggs decided he'd had enough. He walked directly over to the man, who was sitting in the stands with his friends, and said, "Hey fella, are you the guy who's always yelling at me?" The man said, "Yeah, it's me. What are you going to do about it?"

Wade took a new baseball out of his pocket, autographed it, tossed it to the man, and went back to the field to continue his pre-game routine.

The man never yelled at Boggs again; in fact, he became one of Wade's biggest fans at Yankee Stadium.

### ***Elementary school menu***

After reading the children's book Friedel—which tells the story of a little boy organizing a boycott of the school cafeteria—students at William V. Wright Elementary School in Las Vegas decided it was time to initiate a few changes in their own lunchroom. However, they insisted on doing it in a more humble manner. They wrote letters to the lunch lady, Connie Duits, carefully complimenting her but also asking if she could lay off the reheated frozen green beans, a staple at the school.

One boy wrote: "Anything, anything—I'll even eat broccoli."

"We love the rest, but we hate the green beans," added Vivian Palacios.

Zhong Lei: "Dear Mrs. Duits, The food is so yummy and yummy. But here are [sic] one problem. It is the green beans."

As a result of the students' humble prodding, the student services department selected a group of students to sample & vote on new menu items. Corn and carrots made the cut; cooked peas and green beans were shown the door.

***Micah, a prophet of God, says this week, when you feel like taking a strident approach to someone or something, instead, live humbly before your God.***

### **Fortunately, we not only have the prophet's instruction**

We have the example of Jesus Christ to show us how to do right, love mercy, and walk humbly.

And he gives us his Spirit to live this way, too.

## **Communion**

This table is different. This table of the Lord isn't where sinners find Christ but where sinners celebrate being found.

Maybe some morning, instead of solemnly passing these trays, we should dance for joy. Maybe we should sing every born-again song we know. Maybe we should tell our "homecoming" stories and laugh like people who no longer fear death. Maybe we should ask if anyone wants seconds and hold our little cups high to toast lost sisters found and dead brothers alive.

Do you know what we'll do at the Lord's table in heaven? We'll sit around the table from one another and tell stories about how Jesus Christ changed our lives by redeeming us from the hopelessness of sin. How he satisfied our souls in hard times. How he used our ordinary lives to speak his words of life into people around us.

We'll be like old warriors with tales to tell and all the time we want to tell them to each other. We won't tell tales of our great accomplishments. We'll tell stories of what God did in our life during our time down here on earth.

It will be like a family reunion when we sit at the table with people we haven't seen for years, decades, and we'll hear their stories of adventure with God. And they'll hear ours.

That's what communion will be like in heaven.

When we receive the bread and juice to remember the work of Christ in our life, we'll lift our cups and ask for seconds. And our cups will be filled again.

We'll sing songs with joy and gusto.

Want to get a little practice? Do you have a short story to tell this morning of praise to God? I invite you to stand and tell it before we share the bread and share the cup.

<b>Other resources:</b>
Click on the link for the <a href="#">Google Presentation</a> . (Similar to PowerPoint)