
Ignite

Dear Lord, we know that those who hope in You will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. We pray that we will hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for You are faithful and Your promise is sure. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

The God of Micah #2: The God Who Makes Things New

Pastor Sara Leong

Micah 4:1-5 (ESV)

It shall come to pass in the latter 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, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up 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. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; 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. 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.

BIG IDEA: Jesus Christ – Hope of Now, Hope to Come

Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 of Micah spells the hope that God, Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will bring to pass in spite of Israel’s disastrous track record as His people. It is God’s faithfulness to Himself and His covenant that is on display here. It is also the hope that extends to us in Jesus Christ.

What is this hope?

1. Hope of a New Jerusalem *Micah 4: 1-8*

There are four types of freedom that people can enjoy in the new Jerusalem. These are the birthright of the people in Christ's Kingdom. In the book of Micah, Jerusalem represented Judah. This new Jerusalem is nothing like the old one.

i. Freedom from Ignorance *Micah 4:2*

"That He may teach us His ways"

God's ways are always perfect, because He is the perfect God. A true, real relationship with God will be formed as His people learn from Him directly. There will be a direct, personal relationship with God. We can look forward to freedom from ignorance in the New Jerusalem.

ii. Freedom from War *Micah 4:3*

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares."

This means that military weapons will not be used to cause harm anymore, but be converted to peaceful applications, like fuel for power stations, etc. War will also be non-existent then. There will be no such thing as fights between nations and people groups. The reigning Messiah will settle all disputes, and peace and harmony will reign. All will be made right and whole again, just as it is originally intended in the Garden of Eden.

iii. Freedom from Deprivation *Micah 4:4a*

"but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree"

There will be a time of peace and prosperity under the reign of the Messiah. There will be contentment and shelter for God's people. Man will no longer starve, be in need or want.

iv. Freedom from Fear *Micah 4:4b*

There will be no more living in fear for there will be perfect peace under the reign of the Messiah.

When there is freedom from all these, peace will flow. There will be a great freedom from any kind of fear. What a world to look forward to!

The people of God will experience freedom in the name of the Lord. The Lord will start to gather His people again. God will restore not only the strong, but also the weak. He will come to restore and make all things new. He will reign forevermore, His dominion will last forever. God will reign for all eternity, and when that time comes, the people of God will experience all types of freedom. This is what God has promised His people.

The promises of God are glorious. God gave His people a promise that these will truly happen. Our Messiah King will come, and a New Jerusalem is within reach. Eventually, the world will come to learn of God and His ways. God will rule and reign in His fullness. Implements of war will be reshaped to harvest the bounties of earth, and all men will live in peace. Whatever comes, God will preserve His people, so that the time of promised blessings will be made sure.

We can enjoy and experience a glimpse of this fullness, as there is a sense of certainty that Jesus Himself reigns even now. It is when we learn to accept, recognise and submit ourselves to His reign, a glimpse of this freedom is what we can now enjoy.

We may not be able to connect to the new Jerusalem now, but we all do understand what hope is. All of us have something that we are hoping or longing for. We want to see the place where peace ultimately prevails. We all look forward to the day where there is no more suffering, no more fear and no more longing for a better life or a better world. This new city of Jerusalem gives us hope that it quenches that longing within us.

Although our longings may differ from each other's, we all have longings. We all long to have a better place. The good news is, this longing will be satisfied and met when our Messiah returns to reign and rule in the new Jerusalem. There is a better place that awaits His covenant people. There is hope in Jesus Christ.

2. Hope of a New Life *Micah 4:9-13*

After prophesying the glory of a restored Jerusalem, Micah mentioned that there will be pain, akin to those experienced by a woman in labour, which the people of God will still need to go through. Part of this pain that the people of God will encounter comes from a lack of leadership. No human king will be able to save God's people.

Here, we see the prediction of an ultimate King to come.

i The people of God will be redeemed

After the Assyrian attack, the people of God will be conquered and exiled to Babylon. From there, God will not only rescue His people, He will also redeem them from their enemies. It is also foretold that the people of God will triumph over the Assyrians. To fulfill this destiny, they are to go to Babylon first. It is in Babylon that God will come to rescue and redeem them. The message here is that God has a redemptive plan for His people. The people of God will be redeemed.

2. The people of God will be restored – He will bring them back to their land

God will bring together the many nations that arise, to be like sheaves to the threshing floor, and will make the people of God like threshing ox with invisible horns of iron and hooves of bronze, so that they will be able to crush their enemies and devote their gains to the Lord. In God and through God, His people will experience victory over their enemies, and they will be brought back together again.

When the Lord restores, He not only restores just a little bit or just enough; He actually restores with strength and there is ultimate fulfillment in His reign. God not only promises that His people will be made alive again, He also promises their restoration. This new life given will not just be one where they get to live again, but one where they will be victorious and have strength to overcome and overpower their enemies. God, in His faithfulness to His covenant and to His covenant people, will be glorified and be made known. God is to take the glory for all of these.

What does this mean for all of us here today? Not only is there hope of a better place for us in the future, there is also hope for a new life that is victorious. But this can only come through Jesus Christ our Lord. As His people, as Christians, not only do we get to look forward to and enjoy a new home in the new Jerusalem that awaits us where peace prevails and everything is perfect, the life that we get to live then also will very much be perfect. The longings that we have will be satisfied. The current body that we have now is fragile and prone to decay and sicknesses, but with the hope of a new life in Jesus Christ, there will come a time when these forms of sufferings will not be experienced nor recognised anymore. This is something that the followers of Christ can look forward to.

The new life offered by Jesus Christ is filled with certainty of the assurance of God's

saving grace.

For the people of God at the time of Micah, what was promised was a redemption and restoration from the state of exile they were in. It was a temporal saving of God's people from the hands of the enemy. But what God promises to His people – which includes you and I today – is a permanent redemption and restoration through the person of Jesus Christ. This new, victorious life can be enjoyed right now though not in its fullest potential. We have a glimpse of it already, under a new leader that is nothing like the old one in Micah 3. This new leader offers hope, and is found in Jesus Christ Himself.

3. Hope of a New King *Micah 5:2-5*

i. Jesus as the Promised Messiah King *Matthew 2:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, 31; Revelation 22:13*

Bethlehem was insignificant, a place that no one talks about. For God to choose such a place to bring Jesus to this world goes to show that He can take anything, even the small and lowly places to bring to pass, His promise of a one, true King Who will eventually rule and reign forever. God chose something small, quiet, seemingly insignificant and did something there that changed the course of history. Why? So that no man can boast – man can only boast of God's faithfulness and His glorious mercy. Only God can take the glory in the promised Messiah King to come. Even though both Mary and Joseph were in Nazareth, God saw to it that they were to travel to Bethlehem to give birth to Jesus, thus fulfilling the prophecy that Micah spoke about.

Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He did not just exist there. His existence was from a very long time ago, way before the foundation of the earth was made, because He is God Himself. From the very beginning, Jesus was there. There is never a time when He is not there. He is God, and yet He left His throne and glory to come to earth to redeem and restore His people. He is superior and that makes Him the rightful promised King.

ii. Jesus as the Protector Messiah King

- **He will Stand**

This shows that the Messiah King will not be passive in His rulership. He is here to serve the people. He is an active King. He will work in the hearts of people who put their faith and trust in Him.

- **He will Shepherd**

The Messiah King will not leave His people to fend for themselves. A shepherd protects, feeds, guides and leads his flock, and this is exactly what the Messiah King will do for His people. He will restore order in the midst of chaos for those who trust Him.

- **He will Shield in Strength & Security *Micah 5:5***

He will shield his flock with strength and security. This strength is supernatural. There is also security that comes with Him as a Shepherd over His flock. There is so much comfort to be found in Him. Under the reign of this Messiah King, His flock can be assured that His reign will be forever. Jesus Christ's dominion is everlasting.

The Messiah King will be our peace. The peace that He brings is one that will last forever. For the audience of Micah, the hope of a new King was something that they could look forward to, after the hardship that they have gone through. For us now, the good news that we have is that this new King has already arrived and that we can accept His reign over us. The new life and new home that He promised will be made possible in Him. This new life that we get to enjoy presently is about following King Jesus. When we profess that we follow this King, we will inherit all the promises of God.

Conclusion

The reported outpouring of tribute over the very recent passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II has revealed that she has indeed left a mark in this world. Throughout the years of her long reign, one of the notable quotes she made and shared by Pr Sara is as follows:

"I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning, I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God. Like others of you who draw inspiration from your own faith, I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel."

For such a long-time ruler as she was, she acknowledged that the position and power that she carried was not of her own merit, and that she needed to put her trust in someone greater than herself to guide her through the years of her reign. She also acknowledged that the Christian gospel of Jesus Christ carries with it a

message of hope that gave her the strength to stay faithful to her calling.

Hope is ultimately found in the person of Jesus Christ.

The hope of a new home, a new life, is only made possible if you follow Jesus.

Are you receiving the benefits of His rulership in your life?



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- Name an item that you have intentionally saved up to buy. How long did you

save up for? How did you feel when you eventually purchased the item?

- Name ONE of your favourite local cuisines. If you need to queue for it, how long would you queue for it? Have you ever been disappointed with its taste, after all the 'hype' from queueing for it?



Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- What does “having biblical hope” mean to you?
- What are some of the things that you may be longing for? They could either be at the micro or the macro level.

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- What does your ‘posture of waiting’ on the Lord look like? How would you prepare yourself on this journey of waiting when the coming of Jesus is not known? What is something practical you can do today that will help you persevere on this journey?
- In the midst of challenges, do you find yourself struggling in faith? How do you remind yourself that Jesus is faithful?
- Do you feel hopeful that Jesus is still present and active in your life? How can you feel the peace in the midst of your storm and challenges?
- Our Messiah Jesus is faithful to shepherd, protect, feed and care for His sheep. God desires us to be more Christlike. Do you feel compelled to do likewise for those around us?

Question Bank *(Extra questions that you can use to bring your discussion further as you see*

fit):

- Have you ever felt that all hope was gone? How does knowing that there is going to be a new Jerusalem impact your daily living?
- Does hope equal optimism? Do you tend to put your hope on the wrong things? Is hope really about the future only? How are you training yourself in hope?
- How can we encourage one another in hope and faith? How can we bring a foretaste of the new Jerusalem to our community today?
- Is there a cloud of uncertainty over your life today? How can this new hope in Christ remove this cloud and replace them with clarity?
- As we celebrate Malaysia Day, do we carry the hope of Christ for a united, clean nation in the midst of hopelessness we experienced in the past and present? What does that look like?
- In dealing with some major issues in life, e.g. illness, lack, anxiety, depression etc, how would you overcome these with the hope that is in Jesus Christ? These could be long-drawn issues – how would you consistently maintain the faith and hope of Jesus Christ in your life?
- Is Jesus your only hope? Is Jesus really enough for you? What does it look like if Jesus is truly enough for you? How do you hold fast and not waiver, and cling to Jesus?
- What are some of the main differences between your old life and your new life in Christ? How has receiving Jesus brought a change from your old self to your new self? What areas of your life have you yet to surrender to God, and why?



SERMON REFLECTION



Photo by Mark Tegethoff on Unsplash

I was led to join NECF's 40 Days of Fast & Prayer this year. Although I am aware that we should not be led entirely by our feelings, I do feel that I am in some form of 'wilderness' now – in a difficult season and being confronted with several challenges, and I find myself struggling to keep my head up. This has propelled me to seek God through fasting and prayer. After all, God did promise that we will seek Him and find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts, and He will be found by us (Jeremiah 29:13-14). Besides fasting and praying, there is also the commitment to read 10 chapters of the Bible a day, following the daily readings suggested by NECF. I found myself actually being excited as I look forward to what God has to speak to me every day.

Last Wednesday, on day 32 of the fast & prayer, God spoke to me through this verse *Isaiah 43:18-19 Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.* I felt like I was being awakened by a jolt of lightning. After some time of (what I thought to be) fervently seeking God, I felt God was talking to me directly! These verses struck a chord in me, for they addressed my constant ruminating about the past and how God is making a way for my future! The next day, I downloaded another Bible app, and the first verses being pushed to me on my phone were Isaiah 43:18-19. That very same night, I tuned in to the nightly prayer altar anchored by the Malaysian United Firewall, and the preacher shared these same verses! How good and faithful God is! It is as if God wanted to assure me

that I heard Him loud and clear, and He was trying to reach out to me with these same verses under different circumstances.

I repented of the times I cried out to God, lamenting that He is spending too much time counting the hairs on my head (which should be easier for Him as time goes by), and not helping me in the areas that I am toiling in. For want of a better word, I was languishing. I saw no hope in my future, and I felt inadequate. I do not even feel 'qualified' to be used by God as an effective Christian. With time not being on my side, I was riddled with guilt, shame and condemnation from past mistakes and regrets. I was desperate for God to show some indication that He heard me and that some form of His help is on the way. God did show up, in His time. God is faithful. He sees, He hears, He speaks. And where the word of a king is, there is power. God knows me so well – He knows I forget easily, and hence, the gentle 'bombardment' of the same verses in close succession. God was trying to restore hope in me.

Pr Sara's message over the weekend further illuminated the area of hope for me. God has used Pr Sara mightily in assuring me that He makes all things new. Jesus may not be physically here with us now, but He will come again to rule and reign as the Messiah King. It is going to be a glorious future for those who are called by Him! I believe God's restoration is going to be better than before. The past over 30 days of fasting, praying and reading the Word is equipping me to have a better posture in the waiting. It is such a great blessing that I am on a journey to know Him better through His Word. Jesus is the Word made flesh, and if the Word never passes away, I am encouraged to dive daily into the Word each day to get to know my Messiah King more. The Word is rich in His wisdom, love and hope, and I would be doing a disservice to myself if I do not meditate on His Word. The hope of and in God is found in the providence of His Word.

On day 36 of this fast and prayer, God gave me this verse: *Jeremiah 17:7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.* He restores hope.

Hope may or may not come naturally to us, but, in order to have any hope at all, we must know God, the One Who created us all. Through Christ, I know I can have a confident expectation of good, that far exceeds any worldly hope.

As I continue to behold Him, I surrender to Him to make things anew. As I continue to rest in His love, I know I will be restored by His saving grace. The God Who sees me is faithful. Jesus gave His life for mine, and He is trustworthy of all my hope.

I pray for endurance to be the kind of steadfast Christian who will hope in God, no matter what.

Contributed by May Ng



PRAYER



Photo by Godsgirl_madi at Pixabay

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Malaysia's 15th General Elections

Malaysia's 15th Malaysian General Election (GE15) must be held by 14 September 2023, but can be conducted before that date, possibly as early as this year.

Pray for:

- Christians to faithfully exercise our Christian duty by voting in GE15.
- A capable elected government that will be focused on the wellbeing of the nation and its people, especially the marginalised.

- An elected government that will be open to working with the Church in areas such as humanitarian work, sustainable development, and economic equity.

The Eldership

The Eldership of DUMC comprises Pr Chris Kam, Lim Jit Cheng, Ann Wan Kwan, John Yu, Peter Cheong and TC Lau. They provide spiritual covering and leadership to the church. Pastor Dato' Dr Daniel Ho and Pastor Datuk Kee Sue Sing retired from the eldership in May 2022.

Pray that:

- They will continue to steward DUMC with the fear and love of the Lord, especially into the post-COVID world.
- The Elders will work to resource, empower, and encourage the pastors and staff as they fulfill their roles in the church.
- Their families and other responsibilities will continue to be taken care of as they take on this leadership role in DUMC.