

# The Voice of the Lord Cries to the City

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 March 2009

Preacher: William Philip

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you would turn with me to the passage that we read together in the prophet Micah, chapter 6, at verse 9, page 780 in our visitors' Bibles.

Well, we return to our building here in Buchanan Street at the heart of our city center in difficult days, don't we? Not just for our city, but for all the cities of our nation, indeed for the world.

The gathering clouds of economic gloom and darkness are full of foreboding. We may find it hard to believe, but it really does seem to be true that the days when we've never had it so good are now well and truly past, if not forever, then for, I'm sure, a very long time.

So where do we turn for wisdom at such a time? Well, of course, people are turning to many places, to many people, to many theories for help and wisdom.

But I want to suggest this morning that there is one voice that is worth listening to, and one voice alone, a voice which is not silent. And if we will only listen, it is a place where real wisdom is to be found.

[ 1 : 16 ] The voice of the Lord cries to the city, says the prophet, and it is sound wisdom to fear your name. And I want to focus on that text this morning because it's a text we're going to be reminded about every time we pass by our building or every time we enter through its doors, inscribed as it is on the front doors of our building.

The voice of the Lord cries to the city. But which city is the prophet talking about? Well, of course, it's not Glasgow, is it?

It's Jerusalem, and it's not the 21st century as we live in. It is, in fact, the 8th century BC, so not far off, 3,000 years ago. And yet, if you know anything about world history in those days, you will know that there's an uncanny, indeed a striking similarity to the prevailing situation then, when these words were first spoken by the prophet and that that we face today.

Israel, then, was a great nation on the verge of collapse. It was once a great and a powerful and a very wealthy empire, which indeed had ruled from sea to sea in the days of Solomon the king.

But now, two centuries later, it was in the grip of being overrun by the new and rising powers, the great economies of the east. At that time, it was in the form of the Assyrian Empire, which was the growing world superpower of the day.

[ 2 : 48 ] If you go to the British Museum in London, by the way, you can see a whole room full of artifacts from that area that showed just how powerful and how mighty the Assyrian Empire was.

And at the once booming economy, the wealth and the prosperity of Israel and Judah was facing utter collapse and catastrophe. It does sound rather familiar, doesn't it?

I guess the world doesn't change all that much. But that's the city and the nation and the whole civilization, indeed, that the voice of the Lord is crying to. Verse 9 can be translated, Hear, O city and whole tribe.

That is, hear, all you generation of this land and this people. It is a word, of course, primarily to Israel as God's people.

It's a word directly written to them. But Micah is also very clear that this voice of the Lord is equally speaking to all the nations of the earth. If you look back to chapter 1, verse 1 of the prophecy, you'll see that he begins like this.

[ 3 : 54 ] Hear, you peoples, all of you, pay attention, O earth and all that is in it. Well, as we sung, the whole earth is the Lord's and everything and everyone in it.

And so it's sound wisdom, isn't it, for us today to pay heed to that voice, don't you think? Especially if we also should find ourselves living in a society and in a civilization that was once prosperous and powerful, that once was built upon the biblical faith, which is true, isn't it, of our British nation, it's true really of the Western world in general.

If what that voice of the Lord cries to this city is to be listened to and digested by all the peoples, all the nations of the earth, then I think we'd better pay attention, don't you?

So what is this voice saying? What's its message? Well, that's our question for this morning. So I want us to look carefully at this chapter that we read and see what we can learn, what it is that the prophet transmits from the Lord to the people.

And it's very plain, isn't it? It's both a clear cry of revelation from God and a clear call to respond to God.

[ 5 : 12 ] So let's focus first on the clear cry of God's revelation. The voice of the Lord cries to the city. And in doing so, he tells the prophet Micah what he must deliver.

And what he must deliver to the people is a two-fold message of revelation. And the first, and the predominant message it seems, is that he must deliver a very stark and a very unpalatable revelation of reality.

And that reality is that the impending economic collapse and the already accelerating moral and social disaster is all as a direct result of a spiritual collapse that has overtaken the whole nation because it's rejected God, because it's refused and rebutted his word.

What you are experiencing, says the Lord, and what you're about to experience is all rooted in your own wickedness and sin. And it comes to you from me, says the Lord, as a judgment for your sin.

Clear as day, isn't it? That's the very first words that he speaks in the second half of verse 9. Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it. Pretty stark, isn't it? It's quite hard to be sure about the exact translation of that verse.

[ 6 : 35 ] Yes, it is difficult, but what follows is abundantly clear, isn't it? Verse 10, God says, I'm not blind and I'm not demented. I can see the wickedness that's treasured in your society and I won't forget it.

I can see, he says, verse 10, the dirty dealing in business, the wicked scales, the deceitful weights, the dodgy balance sheets and the dodgy books. And I'm not deaf, he says, verse 12.

I can hear the lies and the double dealing that's endemic in your culture. Everyone's on the make. And verse 13, he says, I'm not impotent either. I'm not dead.

I will act. Therefore, I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. You reap what you sow.

Punishment would fit the crime, says verse 14. All that you have tried to get so selfishly, it's not going to satisfy you. Your ventures are going to prove fruitless, verse 15.

[ 7 : 43 ] You will sow, but you will not reap. Why? Again, verse 16, very clear. For you have not kept the statutes of the way of the Lord your God, but you followed the ways of selfishness and godlessness and wickedness.

The ways of Omri and Ahab. Read about them in Kings and Chronicles, the very worst of the leaders of Israel's society. That's my word, says the Lord, to the city that once honored my name.

Now pass that on, Micah, he says, to his prophet. That's the reality and the only reality that explains the situation you're living in in the world.

Well, what is the contemporary prophet going to say when he's charged with that kind of message to deliver? Would you like to be Micah? Anyone here? Don't think so. But you know, it's rather unnerving for us too, isn't it?

Because the Bible is remarkably consistent in its message about reality. The reality that explains our world. Because although times have changed, people haven't changed. The human heart hasn't changed.

[ 8 : 54 ] And that's the reason that the world was in the state it was in in the 8th century BC. And it's not very different, is it, to the situation the world's in today. And that's why this unpalatable revelation of reality that Micah gives is just as true today as it was then.

And just as unpopular and unwelcome today as it was then. People don't want to hear that kind of thing today, do they? We don't like it. They didn't like it in Micah's day either, though, did they?

Not that kind of reality. In fact, it seems to me today that we're the kind of society that flees from almost any kind of reality. There seems to be an almost incredible capacity, doesn't there, for wishful thinking in the face of all the evidence to the contrary in our world's approach to the current economic crisis.

Listen to this from last week's Money Week magazine. One commentator says this, When the going was good, people believed things that weren't true. Now they still believe things that aren't true.

Where they once believed that they could get richer eternally by squandering money they hadn't earned, now they look to the government to do it for them. In the bubble era, people spent too much money they didn't have on too many things they didn't really need.

[ 10 : 07 ] Then came the credit crunch. And now, they hallucinate. That if they spend even more money they don't have on things they hardly even want, they'll get at last what they really need.

Jobs and growth and inflation. Even respected economists, he says, seem to believe in miracles. You see? Living in unreality. It's all around us, isn't it? Always has been.

It's characteristic of the self-delusion of the human heart. So no wonder preachers and prophets tremble at the thought of speaking God's revelation of reality to this world.

Woe is me, says Micah in chapter 7 verse 1. I think you'd say that too. No wonder. It's a terrible message, isn't it? The truth that he has to speak is devastating.

And so, of course, the majority of the preachers and the prophets of that day, as today, wouldn't countenance it at all. One scholar, Bruce Waltke, says this, Blinded by their own cupidity, the false prophets saw no connection between Israel's sin and the rampaging army, that is, the Assyrian army, arrayed against it.

[ 11 : 19 ] But the true prophet saw the Lord marching above it all. And the Lord required him to tell of that reality.

But it's very hard, isn't it? It's very hard to be the whistleblower who cries reality into a world of collective fantasy. Paul Moore found out that, didn't he? Remember, he was the senior executive at HBOS that warned the board of that bank four years ago that they were heading for disaster.

They carried on with their reckless business plan. He found out what happens to whistleblowers. He was sacked and he was gagged, wasn't he? How very foolish that looks now.

But then, well, it was very hard to speak reality, wasn't it? And it's always been hard to speak God's reality into a world colluding in self-delusion and fantasy.

Micah's day was absolutely no different to ours. Look back to chapter 2 and verse 6. It tells you what the prevailing culture was. Don't preach that kind of thing, the people said.

[ 12 : 26 ] Disgrace will never overtake us. No, preach us a positive message. Look down to verse 11. God tells us what they wanted. They want prophets to say, live it up with wine and strong drink and do as you please.

That's the kind of prophets that people want. It's wind and lies, of course, says the Lord. But that's the kind of thing that will get you on the radio and the TV.

And so, of course, the church wants to collude in that and be popular in the world. Just as it was then. So it says, yes, the Lord is wrong.

You're right. We affirm you in living in whatever way you want to live. We'll abolish all those hard and nasty commands. You just live as you like. You just do what feels right for you.

And God will never judge anyone. God will never do anything against that. Disaster will never come. And to those who seem so foolishly and naively to cling to old-fashioned and outdated views of God, they simply dismiss them.

[ 13 : 29 ] Your God is not our idea of God, these modern popular prophets say. But you see, what matters is not our view of God, but God's view of us, isn't it?

And when God's people, and especially His prophets who are charged to speak for Him, when they follow the world's illusion like that, God makes His verdict very, very clear. Turn over to chapter 3, verse 5.

Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry peace to those who flatter them and fatten them. I will shut your eyes and your mouth, He says, verse 6.

It will be night to you without vision. And verse 7, those who claim to speak for God, they'll be disgraced and they'll be put to shame. Well, that happened then and it's been happening ever since.

It certainly is happening in our days, isn't it? Because the mainline churches, in our nation at least, and in the Western world in general really, have compromised in large part God's truth.

[ 14 : 38 ] They've silenced God's revelation of reality through fear, through cowardice, or just simply through indulgence and worldliness. And God has shut the mouths of the clergy, hasn't He?

And He shut the door of the churches. No one listens to anything that church leaders say today. Nobody even cares. That's the truth, isn't it? When I was a student 20 years ago, do you know that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was broadcast morning, noon and night, live on BBC television?

The whole week, every moment of it. Now you have a 20-minute report about 2 o'clock in the morning because it's considered to be utterly irrelevant. Well, so it is.

Just as well, really, nobody sees what goes on. I will shut your mouths. There will be darkness and no vision, says the Lord.

And far more churches, alas, church buildings that are being renovated in our nation today are being renovated to turn into pubs and clubs and shops and flats than to be living places of the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 15 : 46 ] Isn't that true? Well, far better, I say, for a building to be a pub or a restaurant, at least if it gives you food for the body, than a barren shell that gives no food for the soul.

But not all the prophets are silent. Look at chapter 3, verse 8. There is an alternative. But as for me, says Micah, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

But as for me, strikingly similar, isn't it, to Paul's command to Timothy, when he tells him and those who follow him what it means to be a true man of God.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Fight the good fight of faith. Guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 1 Timothy 6. Or 2 Timothy 4.

But as for you, preach the word. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound truth, but will find teachers to suit their own passions.

[ 16 : 56 ] You see, nothing has changed, has it, in 3,000 years. The call to speak God's word is always the call to proclaim reality to a world that is bent on fantasy and self-delusion.

And that will never be popular. Never, ever. But Micah's faithful, isn't he? Do you see how faithfully in chapters 6 and 7 he passes on the penetrating truth he's charged with by God?

That unpalatable revelation of reality that will always attract contempt, always attract ridicule, but which so desperately needs to be heard in our own day and generation just as it was needed then.

Bruce Wolke again puts it with trenchant force. The church today, he says, needs men like Micah who can see the connection between the Western world spurning of its Christian heritage and the international crises that surround it.

Well, if it's our calling, friends, as Christian believers today to pass on a revelation of reality from God to our city and to our society, to our nation, then we better learn, hadn't we, from Micah's faithful exposition of it to his people.

[ 18 : 15 ] Let's look at the message that he passes on as his gospel from God. There's nothing hidden, is there, in his critique of society. It's as penetrating as it is devastating.

He tackles head on the economic calamity and the moral corruption and the social confusion that abounds all around him and he shows so plainly that behind all of this, behind all of it, is the same clear root.

It is the spiritual collapse of a society that has forgotten God, that's ignored his word, that's abandoned his ways. But first it is dealing with the economic calamity.

Verses 14 and 15 of chapter 6. It's just a message, isn't it, of grim realism. And that is the first need in our church today, isn't it? To talk about reality.

The church's message certainly is never to be one of escapism. We do not, in the church of Jesus Christ, inhabit some sort of parallel universe of Barchester Towers. Although I suppose people could be forgiven for thinking that sometimes, the way that clergy carry on and love to dress up in costumes that look ridiculous as though they're going to a fancy dress party.

[ 19 : 29 ] I was at an induction recently and the Presbytery clerk told me he'd been at an induction not long before when he asked the organist just to play something appropriate as the Presbytery walked in. And as he walked in, he realized what he was playing was bring on the clowns.

And I thought to myself, how very, very appropriate. But so often the church does seem to be living in a parallel universe, doesn't it?

Not in the real world. Our message is one of reality. But nor is our message one of playing at politics. Although that's another favorite of our institutional churches today.

But not Micah. Notice that. He's not casting around to lay the blame on politics. The economic calamity of his day, nor ours, is not just about misguided politics of the left or of the right.

Nor is it down to some sort of nebulous, very conveniently nebulous force of globalization. Micah cuts through all that nonsense, doesn't he, to the reality.

[ 20 : 29 ] It's because, verse 13, of your sins. It's God's doing for, verse 16, you have abandoned his ways and gone the ways of godless self-gratification.

God has done this, he says. But you, you people, are wholly responsible. If you throw off his yoke, if you just decide to do what's right in your own eyes, then you can't expect anything but chaos.

Imagine everybody did that on the M8 on your way home. Why should we abide by any rules about how fast to go, about which lane to go in, about which side of the road to drive on.

We'll just go anywhere we please. There'll be chaos. And when human societies do that, God says, all right. But you're going to live with the chaos that you create.

He gives us over to our own folly. That's how Paul sums it up, isn't it, in his Gospel in Romans chapter 1. Listen. Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

[ 21 : 39 ] What was the result? They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil and malice. They were full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and maliciousness.

Well, read today's paper. Therefore, says God, I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. And that's what Micah has to pass on from God, and he does.

And Micah clearly connects economic calamity with moral corruption. Woe is me, he says in verse 1 of chapter 7. And his illustration of what society has become is that it's like a vineyard stripped bare.

The bubble of prosperity has well and truly burst. But he's telling us clearly why, isn't he? Because moral corruption has riddled society, even to the very highest places. Even the best and the noblest, he says, have become hunters and hedges.

Do you see that? Hunters, verse 2. Each hunts the other with a net. Everyone is looking out for number one at the expense of everyone else. Even a prince and a judge and a great man, he says, verse 3.

[ 22 : 47 ] There's even corruption and bribes in the house of lords. Now, who would have believed that possible? And hedges, verse 4. Like thorny briars and hedges.

Even those who are in a position of power and authority to patrol and to protect others in society become obstructors of justice. Just like a society when the head of the financial services authority, the person charged with overseeing city financial institutions and keeping them straight, is the very man who sacked the whistleblower at the H-boss for warning about calamity to come.

Appointed by the Prime Minister himself. Still think the Bible isn't contemporary? A world of hunters and hedges, says Micah. And that moral corruption, he says, is also inseparable from the social confusion that he speaks of in verses 5 and 6.

Verse 5, there's no trust anywhere. There's no confidence anywhere. Well, it's a world of banking today, isn't it? And alas, too often, the world of domestic relationships more and more.

Lawyers can't make any money now from selling houses, can they? There's plenty. Plenty of litigation for strife in employment relationships, breakdowns in marriage relationships.

[ 24 : 15 ] Verse 6, no harmony either among communities, between ethnic communities, even between families. There's only contempt, says Micah, discord, even violence in the home and in the street.

It's a picture, isn't it? He's giving us a disintegration of society, personal values, the sanctities of both public life and private life are being ignored, are being scorned and disputed.

And Micah is very clear about what is the root of all of these things, isn't he? It's not an economic problem alone. Nor is it a social problem alone, as though you could sort it out by better education or better benefits.

Nor is it just a moral problem, as though moral corruption just arrived out of nowhere. No, says Micah, behind all of this, very clearly, lies a spiritual collapse.

Verse 2 of chapter 7, the godly have perished from the earth. It's sound wisdom, says the prophet, to fear God's name.

[ 25 : 21 ] The fear of the Lord, says the wisdom writer, is the beginning of wisdom for man and for society. But where there's a spiritual collapse, where there's no fear of his name, because no one will listen to his word, no one will heed his voice, well, inevitably, there'll be disaster, won't there?

Where there is no vision, says the wisdom teacher, the people cast off restraint. Righteousness is what exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

What Micah is saying, clearly to his society, is this, in the words of one writer. This, that you're seeing, is the end product, the inevitable consequence, of a departure from God.

It's not possible, whatever the simple moralists or the humanists may say, to create a society that is just and equitable, and to maintain basic moral standards of truth and love, and purity and kindness, while leaving God out of the reckoning.

It's always only a matter of time before the truth of this forces itself upon men's minds, and the breakdown and collapse of systems that attempt to do that.

[ 26 : 35 ] Well, perhaps we're just beginning to realize that in our own country, in these days, where in recent years, of course, there's been such a determined effort to squeeze Christianity totally out of the public life of our nation.

Did you see that BBC poll this week? That showed that the vast majority of people, even non-Christian people, even people of other religions, want the Christian religion to have a major part in the public life of our nation.

That was such a shock to the denizens at the BBC that it was a headline item in the news. It might cause the BBC itself to examine its own agenda.

And that's God's revelation of reality to the city in Micah's day. Friends, it's just the same reality that the Bible reveals in our own day, especially to our Western society.

Our Western society has been so privileged for centuries with a heritage built on the words and the ways of God. We've had the Word of God freely, haven't we? We've had the Scriptures.

[ 27 : 40 ] We've had the privilege of laws and institution and public life that has been built on the solid rock of the truth of God. As Micah says in chapter 6, verse 8, He has told us what is good, what the Lord requires of us.

But in Western society today, it seems, just like in Israel back then, people won't listen. They haven't feared His name. The truth of God is forgotten in the land, alas, because too often, the truth of God has not been proclaimed in the church.

Sounds a pretty hopeless message, doesn't it, for the prophet to deliver. But I hope you'll notice that it's not the only revelation that God gives to Micah. Along with that grim revelation of reality and of hopelessness because of sin and revelation, is alongside it a revelation of restoration.

Can there be any hope for such a society in decline and in despair? Can there be any hope for the human condition in general for our own day? Seems pretty bleak, doesn't it?

And left to ourselves, the answer is almost certainly no. No hope. But look at verse 7 of Micah chapter 7.

[ 29 : 02 ] Because the prophet wants to turn us away from our own selves and to turn our eyes elsewhere to the Lord Himself. He turns our eyes and focuses our hope on the one who is the judge, the punisher, the destroyer for sin.

And the astonishing thing is that it is this same God, the Lord, who is also, he says, the God of salvation, the God who hears His cry for mercy. So that even the desolate city can cry out together in verse 8, I shall rise and the Lord will be a light to me.

There is a hope of restoration, it seems. But on what basis? Well, the answer here as it is all through Micah's earlier prophecies of judgment and of hope the answer is that there is hope in the promise of the one who is to come, who will shepherd God's people, who will bless the flock of His inheritance.

You can see that in verse 14. Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance. Of course, you know though that the most famous part of Micah's prophecy comes in chapter 5 and we read it every Christmas about the promise of this great shepherd who would be born at last in Bethlehem.

the one who would come who is of ancient days to shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord. That promise, of course, is fulfilled in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 33 ] That's the hope that Micah is focusing his people on here and us also. But how will this shepherd bring hope to a sinful people under just judgment and punishment for God for their sins?

Well, look down to verse 19 of chapter 7. You will have compassion on his people. But not, notice a compassion that ignores their sins or pretends them away into unreality.

The compassion that removes them. That truly deals with them forever. That casts them into the depths of the sea just as God saves his people under Moses by casting the Egyptian enemies into the depths of the sea.

Is that what Micah's saying? He's saying, friends, that the only hope for a rebel people under God's curse, the only hope for collapsing societies under God's judgment is the shepherd.

It's God Himself who comes to bear away the guilt and the stain and the stink and the consequences of our sins and who casts them into the depths of the sea.

[ 31 : 52 ] It just seems such an extraordinary, far-fetched thing, doesn't it? That God, the judge, the punisher, the scourge of sin should be God the Savior, the compassionate One, the Redeemer, the Restorer.

until perhaps you read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in John's Gospel. I am the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

That's what I've come to do, says Jesus, God in the flesh, to cast your sins into the depth of the sea, to bring restoration to the remnant of my inheritance, to those that Micah speaks of here in verse 18, who look to me, who will call on me as the God of salvation.

And that's God's cry to the cities, to the peoples of our world today, just as it was way back then. A revelation of reality. Yes. The truth about our world, the truth about our lives, which are as they are solely because of our sin and rebellion against Him.

But also a wonderful, wonderful revelation of restoration. Possible. Indeed assured for all those who will look to Him and wait on the God of salvation.

- [ 33 : 18 ] Of course, the Gospel of God isn't just a clear cry of revelation. It is always also a clear command to respond to that revelation. And the response it calls for always is one of repentance.

That was Jesus' message, wasn't it? Repent for the kingdom, for the promised restoration of God is at hand. Repent. See, that restoration is not automatic, is it?

The offer is truly broad and universal. You can see that in verses 11 and 12. God's boundaries of hope extend to all nations and all peoples. He calls from every one of them.

Yet, not all respond. Micah speaks often, as all the prophets do, of a remnant who will seek and find God's pardon. It's clear there in verse 18, isn't it? The remnant of His inheritance.

And so it's always been. If you read those words of Jesus in John chapter 10, when you go home, you'll see it was just so with Him. Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. I am the door.

- [ 34 : 21 ] If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved. But immediately, we read, His words caused a sharp division. Many refused Him.

Why should we do that? Well, it's because repentance is the very hardest thing on earth for human beings to do, isn't it? Especially for those proud and formerly successful people.

Seen that in the news this week, haven't we? It means taking upon our lips these words in verse 9 of chapter 7, doesn't it? I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him until He pleads my cause, until He executes judgments for me.

Only He can bring me to the light and to vindication. I'm in the wrong. I deserve, I deserve, and we all deserve, God's wrath and indignation.

And I'm helpless, as is our society, until God judges us as we don't deserve, until He vindicates us. That's the hardest thing in the world to admit, isn't it?

- [ 35 : 42 ] It's almost impossible for us to ever admit anything that we've done wrong. Far less. The weight of our rebellion against God. And that's the paradox of the Christian Gospel, isn't it?

There is no depth of sin and weakness and worthlessness that can ever keep you from the total restoration and glorious grace that the Lord Jesus talks about.

But a sense of pride, a sense of righteousness and self-worth, that can keep you from that restoration because it stops you from real repentance.

There is restoration, cries the prophet, full and free. There is restoration, says the Lord Jesus Christ. But not for the proud.

Only for the penitent. It's a hard, hard message for people to bear and for societies to bear. And yet it is a wonderful message, you know, because when you really heed that command to repent before God, what you discover, in fact, is that it's really a command to rejoice.

- [ 36 : 53 ] To rejoice in the God who is like no other, who abounds in loving compassion, who so loved us that to pardon our sin and iniquity, to pass over our transgression, He gave His own self and laid His own life down as the great shepherd of the sheep that we might be saved.

Look at the rejoicing of verse 18. Who is a God like you pardoning iniquity and passing over transgressions for the remnant of His inheritance? How wonderful, says one writer, that in a book so charged with crisis and doom, the last word should be one of sheer grace and mercy.

That's always the last word of our glorious God and Savior, made known fully and finally in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if only we will hear it and receive it humbly and with joy, it's for us.

His clear cry of revelation that yes, there is a terrible reality of human sin that is the root of all our world's problems and all our personal problems.

But also, there is a tremendous restoration that He's promised. Promised for the whole world on the day He comes and promised for us and for our lives even now, if only we too will heed that command to repent.

[ 38 : 21 ] We'll throw all of our trust on Him. We'll find that abundant rejoicing that belongs to those who are His. The people who sing, Who is a God like you?

Pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression. He does not retain His anger forever because He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us.

He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. The voice of the Lord cries to the city and it is sound wisdom to fear Your name.

May God help our voice here in St. George's Tron and every one of us in our places of work and in our homes to truly echo the cry of the Lord that this city and the people that we love, the people we've been called to serve, may raise their voices with us to the God of our fathers, the God of compassion and grace and mercy and love.

Let's pray. Amen. Who is a God like you who shepherds your people with the staff, the flock of your inheritance.

[ 39 : 47 ] Fill our minds and hearts, we pray, O God, with the word of your challenge and the word of your compassionate grace that our hearts may live with abounding joy and our tongues may proclaim the voice of the Lord to this city that we love.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. BookME