

Sunday, December 6, 2015

“Jesus and Our Longing for Wholeness”

First in the Series, “Light in the Darkness: Jesus and our Deepest Longings”

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What the prophets teach us at Christmastime:

1. God sees and feels and responds to our longings and our needs.
2. God is both smaller and bigger than we’d tend to assume.
3. God sees our half-baked coping mechanisms and tells us we’re full of it.
4. God calls us to return to the healthy, sound, integrated lives that make everyone happy.

How Can I Step Toward Wholeness?

1. When life gives you lemons, study the lemons.
2. Make a habit of admitting how you’re full of it.
3. Choose Jesus as your lifetime primary care physician.
4. Receive mercy and kindness, give mercy and kindness each day.

Micah 1:2-5 (NLT)

² Attention! Let all the people of the world listen! Let the earth and everything in it hear. The Sovereign LORD is making accusations against you; the Lord speaks from his holy Temple. ³ Look! The LORD is coming! He leaves his throne in heaven and tramples the heights of the earth.

⁴ The mountains melt beneath his feet and flow into the valleys like wax in a fire like water pouring down a hill. ⁵ And why is this happening? Because of the rebellion of Israel—yes, the sins of the whole nation. Who is to blame for Israel’s rebellion? Samaria, its capital city! Where is the center of idolatry in Judah? In Jerusalem, its capital!

Micah 2:1-2 (NLT)

What sorrow awaits you who lie awake at night, thinking up evil plans.

You rise at dawn and hurry to carry them out, simply because you have the power to do so. ² When you want a piece of land, you find a way to seize it.

When you want someone’s house, you take it by fraud and violence. You cheat a man of his property, stealing his family’s inheritance.

Micah 5:13-14 (NLT)

I will destroy all your idols and sacred pillars, so you will never again worship the work of your own hands. ¹⁴ I will abolish your idol shrines with their Asherah poles and destroy your pagan cities.

Micah 6:6-8 (NLT)

What can we bring to the LORD? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves?

⁷ Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins?

⁸ No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 5:2-5a (NLT)

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf. ³The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the woman in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. ⁴And he will stand to lead his flock with the LORD's strength, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. ⁵And he will be the source of peace.

Matthew 9:2-13 (NRSV)

² And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." ³ Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴ But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'?" ⁶ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." ⁷ And he stood up and went to his home. ⁸ When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings. ⁹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. ¹⁰ And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹² But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Micah 7:18-20 (NLT)

Where is another God like you, who pardons the guilt of the remnant, overlooking the sins of his special people? You will not stay angry with your people forever, because you delight in showing unfailing love.

¹⁹ Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean! ²⁰ You will show us your faithfulness and unfailing love as you promised to our ancestors Abraham and Jacob long ago.