Sermon: "God's Mission Manifesto For Us" January 8, 2023 NSAC
Text: Micah 6:1-8 Sub-Texts: Genesis 12:3; Micah 5:2 Pastor Dave Sattler

Sources: Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application Bible, The Message, YouVersion. Commentary: Gary V. Smith. Books: *"How to Talk About Jesus Without Being That Guy"* by Sam Chan (2022), *"Let Go"* by Fenelon (17thC), *"Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon"* by David Kinnaman & Mark Matlock (2019), *"Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada's Opioid Crisis"* by Benjamin Perrin (2020). Wikipedia: Doctrine of Discovery. Images: unsplash.com. Song: "O Come to the Altar" by Elevation (2017). Conversations: with Dave Greer.

I. Introduction:

- Hello, everyone. Dave Sattler here, one of the pastors at NSAC.
- Thank you for joining us in person and online. It's great to be together.
- Today is the first of a mini-series on Missions. To start 2023, we begin with a two-week series I'm affectionately calling *"A Mission Fortnight."*
- Recently I came across this great quote in a book I've been reading called *"Faith For Exiles"* by David Kinnaman & Mark Matlock.
    - ***<Slide>*** Says, Q: *"God shares his grand mission with us—and wants us to live out his mission with others too—**because he loves to love with us**."* —p.179
- This is God's *"grand mission"* we're invited into: "*God loves to love [others] with us."* And I love it! This "*Mission Fortnight"* grows out of God's heart for North Shore Alliance Church and the people He's called together here to uniquely live out His mission—in our city, and, spilling out from here, around the world!

- ***<Slide>*** Micah is a minor prophet with a major message.
- His career spans some 55 years in 7th Century BC.
- His assignment from God is to call out, and call back the people of God.
- Micah's message: *'God still agrees to be your God, to dwell with you, and to bless you. But, things have gone terribly wrong in your covenant relationship with Him. And it's your fault. And, if you don't repent—turn back to worship, obey, and serve your God, there will be consequences.'*

- ***<Slide>*** In Micah 5:1-2 the prophet delivers this word: *"Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*

- Its leaders had become obsessed with wealth and power, so God permits Jerusalem to be surrounded by its enemies—why King Hezekiah has to build this water tunnel to provide for the people under *"siege."*
- But its king could not save it. Powerful Jerusalem would be destroyed.
- In contrast, tiny Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the only King who could save the people. 700 years before Jesus is born, Micah accurately predicts this. God's people would have learned about this prophecy in 'Sabbath School' for seven centuries.

- ***<Slide>*** Yet, when the time comes for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, few recognize Him. Ironically, it's a group of astrologers from faraway Persia on their quest to find Baby King Jesus, that quote Micah 5:2 back to King Herod and the Jewish religious leaders.
- With messages of warning and hope, in Micah, ***we see both God's righteous judgment and God's incredible love,*** in screen.
- God gives His people countless chances to repent. Yet, these opportunities must not be taken for granted. Never a 'cosmic pushover,' Almighty God must confront sin, but still loves the sinner.
- This tension is a major theme of the minor prophet book of Micah.

<Slide> Today we focus on **Micah 6:1-8,** The Lord's Case Against Israel.

1 *Listen to what the Lord says: "Stand up, plead my case before the*
mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say.
2 *Hear, you mountains, the Lord's accusation; listen, you everlasting*
foundations of the earth. For the Lord has a case against his people;
he is lodging a charge against Israel.
3 *My people, what have I done to you?*
How have I burdened you? Answer me.
4 *I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of*
slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.
5 *My people, remember what Balak king of Moab plotted and what*
Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from
Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord."

<Slide> 6 *"With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down*
before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt
offerings, with calves a year old?

7 *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*
8 *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.*
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

<Prayer> 'Lord, please move me out of the way. Come and speak to us by Your Spirit. We're hungry to hear from you.'

II. Biblical Teaching: Micah 6:1-8

1. <*Slide*> A Courtroom Trial (v.1-2)

- *Plop!* Right down here in the middle of Micah … a courtroom appears: *"The Lord has a case against his people"* (2b) and the *"mountains"* (2a) are even called as witnesses. God is Judge and His people are on trial.
- What on earth for? Throughout the book, the prophet Micah exposes a laundry-list of offences including: fraud, theft, greed, debauchery, oppression of the poor and vulnerable, hypocrisy, heresy, idolatry, injustice, extortion and lying, and murder.
- Instead of being a *"blessing"* (Genesis 12:3) to others as God designed it, the people had become a curse … to others, to themselves, and to God.
- The people must not naively assume that God's covenant relationship with them will continue if there is no repentance—or, renewed commitment, on their part to worship, obey, and serve Him.

2. <*Slide*> God's Defence (v.3-5)

- God takes a remarkable tack and begins His defence with two rhetorical questions—effectively putting Himself on the stand first: '*Have I done something bad? Have I mistreated you?*' (3), He asks.
- This both reveals God's tender love and care for His people and demonstrates a wise mediation or conflict-resolution strategy.
- [To disarm defensiveness, it's often helpful not to launch right into an outright frontal attack! Though sadly I seem to be pretty good at that!]
- Next God reminds the people to *"remember"* (5) how, in the past, He acted graciously on their behalf. And He cites four memorable examples:
- 1) The Exodus: how God *"redeemed"* (4a) them from slavery in Egypt.
- 2) God's provision of leadership through Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (4b).

- 3) God's deliverance from the terrible curse of Balak, king of Moab.
- And 4) How God miraculously guided their journey across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land.
- All of these instances are meant to remind how God has kept <u>His</u> side of the covenant relationship with His people. Proof that, in <u>no</u> way, does the fault for the broken-down relationship lie with God.

3. <*Slide*> <u>The People's Defence</u> (v.6-7)

- Perhaps Micah's imagining Israel's defence, or maybe he's quoting some actual responses he's heard from people on the streets of Jerusalem.
- One can just hear the people stewing, *'How can we fix this?'*
- *'If God wants us to bow a little lower in our public displays of worship, we can do that. And, how 'bout we bring some more costly, choice burnt offerings to the temple? If it's bigger, or more extravagant sacrifices God requires, then we can surely pay Him off!'*
- Problem is: God cannot be bought or bribed with showy or expensive gifts. And like one commentator says, Q: *"God is far more interested in the <u>person</u> than any gift one might bring. One's character and behaviour are what matter to God."* – Smith, p.553
- APP—And I wonder: Have I too misunderstood what pleases <u>God</u>?
- Maybe I have become more concerned about what pleases <u>me</u>?
- I may have given a lot, put tons of energy into our worship services, even sacrificed much for God, but what's my heart <u>really</u> like behind it all?
- What is it that God <u>really</u> wants from me?

4. <*Slide*> <u>What God Really Wants</u> (v.8)

- V8 forms a ***mission manifesto*** for the people of God.
- It's here God shows us … *"what is good"* and what He "*requires"* of us.
- And it appears there are three basic things God wants from each of us.
- *"To act justly"* means to seek right social relationships based on God's principles of human dignity. How fair are we in our dealings with others? How we treat <u>all</u> kinds of others <u>really</u> matters.
- *"To love mercy"* this is a little more tricky. [The modern NIV might be a rough translation.] Beyond *"mercy"* this has more to do with *loyalty*, or *lovingkindness*, or *faithfulness* to God and others—no matter what.
- How compassionate are we in our relationships?

- *"To walk humbly with your God"* has to do with our interior life that spills over into how we carry ourselves.
- Micah says this involves repentance and surrender—not doing things our <u>own</u> way, but a careful, diligent, non-flashy following after God.
- And it's my belief that these three basics from Micah ought to form, and govern the hearts of God's people on <u>His</u> mission.
- Beyond ritual obedience, God wants our <u>love</u>. And, like I said earlier, *"God loves to love [others] <u>with</u> us."* — Kinnaman/Matlock, p.179

III. <u>Life Applications</u>

- Well, time now to 'land the plane' on a few application points. I warn you: fasten your seat-belts, some of these may be hard-hitting.

A. <***Slide***> ***Protect the <u>poor</u> and <u>vulnerable</u>.***

- Prophet Micah confronts the people with the blind sin … of asking God to help <u>them</u>, while they continue to <u>ignore</u> the plight of the needy, marginalized, and oppressed among them.
- *"To act justly"* means we <u>never</u> condone behaviour that <u>takes</u> something that rightfully belongs to another.
- ILL—The dark *Doctrine of Discovery* lurks in our history.
- Q: *"A legal principle that European countries extinguished Indigenous sovereignty and acquired the underlying title to Indigenous Peoples' lands upon discovering them."*
- It's easy this side of history to point the finger at our forefathers, but truthfully, had we been born then, the lure of personal advancement at the expense of the vulnerable would likely have driven us too.
- What will we learn from the sins of our past?
- Foreigners, slaves, orphans, widows, the poor are always susceptible, and at great risk of being taken advantage of by others.
- People in positions of power preying upon the weak is <u>never</u> God's plan.
- And followers of Jesus <u>must</u> stand vehemently against this.

- <***Slide***> APP—The justice and peace of God feels so elusive, yet so needed … in our lives—and in our world. And we are confronted with some clear applications right in our own backyard …
- What is our responsibility to the poor and vulnerable in <u>our</u> city?

- How does *acting justly* impact things like: property redevelopment, the jobs we take, how and where we shop, and how we think about, do business with, relate to, and love our Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nation Indigenous neighbours?
- For Christ-followers here on the North Shore, what does God-honouring property ownership look like when many in our community struggle mightily with housing insecurity?
- How do we steward well the resources God has given us without further oppressing those who are not as fortunate materially as we are?
- Here's what I do know: We must always resist the urge to cheat the poor and vulnerable in order to enhance our own social or financial position.
- As we *"act justly,"* we experience more deeply the heart of God and we ourselves become changed.
- And, because ***protecting the poor and vulnerable*** among us is so counter-cultural, when do it, Jesus shines through—and, many are able to see Him.

B. <***Slide***> ***Uphold dignity for all.***

- The Christian Story touts the dignity of all people, not because identity and worth are self-determined, but by the simple fact that every human being is made in the image of God.
- And, we are to treat everyone with dignity—no matter their appearance, ability, behaviour, social standing, or accomplishments.
- ILL—The less-talked-about pandemic of the past decade has been the heartbreaking opioid crisis, that has particularly rocked Vancouver.
- A recent World Health Organization study found that people with drug addiction had the highest level of social disapproval or stigma of any class of individual.
- My family, and our church community has lost people in this crisis, and I have been trying to wrap my head around it more.

- <***Slide***> In his 2020 book, *"Overdose: Heartbreak and Hope in Canada's Opioid Crisis,"* local author, UBC Law Professor, Benjamin Perrin, who [I was shocked to learn] reveals his Christian faith on the second to last page, writes:
    - Q: *"… I remembered back to why I started looking into the opioid crisis in the first place—a prayer to God for a heart of*

<u>compassion</u> for people affected by it. The same Jesus who I follow laid his hands on people with leprosy when no one else would come near them."

- Then Perrin asks a sobering diagnostic question, Q: *"Are more professing Christians willing to similarly love and care for people who use drugs, rather than judge and condemn them?"* — p.232

- ***<Slide>*** It's a well-known fact that the antidote for addiction is <u>connection</u>. And, I have to say, that God has equipped the Christian Church for this <u>better</u> than any other community on the planet!
- Yet our commitment to the mission of Jesus is tested when God places people we consider different, or difficult into our lives.
- How much <u>mercy</u> will we show? For people with whom we disagree? Or, people who annoy us? Or, people who wrong us? Or, people who are so different from us, being in their presence makes us uncomfortable?
- And I believe the litmus test for how deeply Jesus has penetrated our hearts is how we respond. Will we ***uphold dignity for all*** people—see <u>ev</u>ery person made in the image of God?

- ***<Slide>*** APP—The Christian Story confronts our stereotypes and pokes at our selfish attitude toward relationships. Do we only associate with people whom we think will help get us somewhere?
- God has brought many new Canadians and people struggling with mental health and addiction right into our church community.
- Will we strike up conversations—even when it's awkward? Will we make room in our lives-our hearts for people <u>different</u> from us? Or, will we play it safe and only talk to people who look, smell, and talk like us?
- I believe that, under the influence of the Spirit, when God's people step out with compassion for all kinds of others, a miraculous reversal of the effects of sin and brokenness in our world can take place!
- I've seen it.

C. ***<Slide> <u>Remember</u> all that God has done.***

- During Micah's courtroom trial, God declares to His people, *'**Remember all that I've done** for you. Because then you will know what I <u>can</u>, and will do for you in the future.'*

- ILL—In my opinion, a tragedy of the global pandemic, faith-wise, is how it's disrupted habits and rhythms in our walks with God.
- When in-person church stopped, I heard some say, *'It's nice to have my Sunday mornings free.'*
- And I fear our corporate spiritual memory has faded some.
- Add that to the negative press the church continues to face over treatment of LGBTQ2SP++ people, complicit involvement in Indian Residential Schools, and our polarized responses to CoVID, and there's a lot to turn people off … on church, church people, and the Christian message and mission of Jesus in general.
- I feel particularly concerned for the faith of the next generations.
- Our church seems to have emerged with a distinctly different core. These days our Sunday gatherings appear to be missing a good chunk of our youth and young adults and people aged 13 to 40.
- My generation hasn't done a great job of embodying, modelling, or passing on, the memory of all that God has done for us.

- ***<Slide>*** APP—People of NSAC, God's eternal faithfulness is the bedrock that forms the relationship He invites us into—in Christ.
- We must ***remember all that God has done*** for us.
- ILL—When facing death, 4th Century Christian Bishop Ambrose was most famously asked by a congregant, *"Aren't you afraid?"* To which, remembering God's faithfulness throughout his life, Ambrose responded, Q: *"No, I am not afraid. For we have a Good Master."*
- This I know: God is faithful and God is good.
- And, this is the message we must remember—and need to remind family, friends, and neighbours about.

D. <*Slide*> *Walk humbly with God.*

- In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson phrases it this way, Q: *"Don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously!"*
- Prophet Micah confronts the people: *'You are guilty of making your own private blends of religion, which are really just you expecting God to rubber stamp your whims and desires—and calling that faith.'* Hoof!
- This disarms belief in our own self-righteousness, and challenges the idea that our progressivism, how we particularly-upstanding West Coast

citizens, who are open-minded and drive our electric vehicles, are somehow more spiritually 'highly-evolved' than most.
- Reality is: Our world can smell fake Christianity a mile away.
- Both these subtle attitudes, self-righteousness and smug progressivism undermine, and severely limit, the mission of Jesus through our lives.

- ***<Slide>*** ILL—About 15 years ago, NSAC began to have a vision to try and meet the need for affordable housing in our city.
- And many of you prayed that God would open a door—literally!
- Then finally, back in 2015, we found a benevolent landlord willing to rent their property to us down on Keith Road, to house people with barriers to housing. Along the way, we connected with Lazarus Community Society to form the non-profit necessary to make this vision a reality.
- Somewhat pridefully, I think we thought that if we just housed homeless people we'd be doing them a big favour, and we would transform their lives … and we would all live happily ever after.
- Well, we were dead wrong. It was incredibly difficult. And, in several cases, our housing people made our relationship with them worse—and our lives, and theirs, more miserable. We were severely <u>humbled</u>.
- In 2018, we were about to close down, when we approached Canadian Mental Health Association who had years before said they were not interested in working with us.
- This time, they said, 'Wait a minute, don't shut it down.'
- Long story short, God had other plans. We've learned a lot, it's far from perfect, but we've started to see some positive results!
- Today we have a partnership with CMHA, Health Connexions, and CapChurch—and, over the past couple of years, we have expanded to three community houses housing more than a dozen people in our city.
- And Lazarus Society, mostly made up of North Shore Alliance congregants, handles all the business and operations of our three community houses and employs our three House Pastors.

- ***<Slide>*** So, what's it look like to ***walk humbly with God***?
- One writer suggests, Q:*"[It's when] we know what we are and we have no hope of becoming <u>anything</u> <u>better</u> except through the <u>mercy</u> of God."* — Fenelon, p.53
- And I sense from God a renewed call, in our day, to simple faith and obedience—in <u>Him</u> and <u>His</u> way.

- God desires our heart and always welcomes our humble surrender and repentance. Q: *"The Father's arms are open wide."* — Elevation Worship (2017)
- We do well, and the mission of Jesus moves forward best, when we live in this <u>humble</u> posture. Amen.
- I'd like to invite the Worship Team forward now. Before we have communion, they will lead us in a song—to prepare our hearts.
- First let's stand and pray together. <PRAY>

V. <*Slide*> <u>Communion Instructions & Reflection</u>

- I invite the servers to come now and take their places.
- If you have put your faith in Jesus as your Saviour, you are invited to participate in communion.
- In a moment you can come forward or in the balcony go to the back.
- Please hold your hands out and the server will put a piece of bread in your hands and say, *"this is the Body of Christ given for you."*
- Then, you can take that bread and dip it into the cup (not too deep) and your server will say, *"this is the Blood of Christ shed for you."*
- And then you can then eat the bread.
- If you need gluten-free options, they are here at the centre aisle.
- Immediately following communion, during the songs, if there is something on your heart you would like prayer for, our team members will be available: Daniel & Leah, Cathy & Kirsten// Dave & Marijke, Sofia & Marjan.
- God loved us so much He came to earth in the person of God the Son Jesus to bridge the gap between Holy God and sinful us.
- And <u>this</u> is what we <u>remember</u> in communion: ***God's amazing grace poured out on all humanity.***
- Please come now as we partake together.