

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
December 11, 2011**

*Micah 4:11-13*

**Mighty Messages from Micah: THRESH!**

***1. It's Not Above You***

**Hymns: *Come, Lord Jesus* – 26 – 9 – 12**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

A mid-level employee is at his desk, tucked into his cubicle, busy with some paperwork and a game of solitaire when a shadow appears above him. The shadow asks if he has heard about the latest snag on the project and then proceeds to ask him what he thinks should be done to solve the problem. Without giving too much thought, the guy at the desk leans back, puts out his hands, and says, “That’s above me - way beyond my pay grade.”

What are some reasons that a person might utter that phrase, “It’s above me?” The guy in that cubicle knows that, ultimately, he doesn’t have control of the situation; he doesn’t have any responsibility in the situation; and when it comes down to it, he feels that he really doesn’t have any part in what is going on. I’m sure that might be a feeling that is commonplace in large corporations.

Is that how it works in the world, as well? I think that it is very common for people to look at themselves and then look out into a big world and think, “God is going to do what God is going to do,” and “People are going to do what they are going to do.” “There isn’t a lot that I can have sway over,

so it is better for me to sit back and say, “That’s above me, out of my control, so outside of my realm of concern or effort.”

That “small” attitude certainly affected the people of Israel during the time of Micah the prophet. At this point in world history, the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Israel was a dwindling country. Not big to begin with, they were divided in two, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The territory that God had marked out for them when they entered the Promised Land was continually shrinking as the edges crumbled and melted together with heathen neighbors. A country once renowned for its strong leaders no longer found strength or longevity when it came to their kings.

And while inner turmoil caused enough problems, things were multiplied by the fact that Israel lay right in the middle of the big boys of that time period. The mighty nation of Egypt was always to the West. And the Assyrians, Babylonians, and eventually the Persians were to the East. Being surrounded by world powers and competing empires meant that the nation of Israel was a bit of a ragdoll; pushed, pulled, cast to the side. They certainly had no physical control over what might happen to them. They had no political sway either. Their best bet was to go with whoever looked strongest and hope not to get run over in the process of empire building.

In that situation and with all of those things going on around them, it is easy to think that maybe they assumed things were above them, that what they did probably didn’t matter all that much. Perhaps God had a plan that he was sticking to, but certainly Israel had no power or sway to be a part of the plan. Ultimately, God was going to do what he was going to do and the nations around them were going to do what they were going to do. I would imagine that it would’ve been very difficult to be a person in Israel during that time, whether they were

believers or not, and to see any sort of personal or national significance or purpose.

And how about you? Do you ever feel that way? The old “small fish in a big pond” dilemma? Maybe you’ve felt that way as an individual? Do you find yourself questioning how much of an impact you personally can have at Holy Trinity amongst so many people, full of different talents and abilities? Or, maybe you wonder how impactful you could really be in the lives of the people you know out in the world? Could you really change someone’s life by speaking up? Could you really make a difference by serving on a board at church? It is easy to conclude that God’s plans will be carried out just fine without you.

I think that attitude can also inflict us collectively as a church, especially as we look out and see numerous churches around us. What kind of impact can we really make? It is easy to think that because there are plenty of options for people who are looking, we don’t need to go the extra mile to get them here. Besides, who are we to think that this is the best option out of all those many choices? It might seem “too big” to think that Holy Trinity could really stand out in this community?

And that viewpoint can even be taken to a synodical level. “What is the WELS to the world around us anyways? A relatively small group of overly conservative Lutherans; people who are unrealistic in their expectations of how people will live and how they will view all of the teachings of the Bible? Certainly, we aren’t big enough as a church body to take on the many problems that attack Christianity.”

As small fish in a big pond, the best bet, the simplest solution that we can reason, is to take care of ourselves and sit back and watch as God’s plans come to fruition. Because, ultimately, God is going to do what he is going to do; and people are going to do what they are going to do. We will be

a lot better off if we just concentrate on ourselves first, our congregation second, and maybe our synod third. It is easy to say, “It’s above me. It’s above us. We can’t really have that great of an impact about what is going on in the world around us.”

However, the problem with that line of thinking is that in order for God’s plan to come to fruition, we do need to be a part of it. It’s not above us. God certainly has grand plans for this world. He has since he brought it into existence at the Creation. **And YOU are part of the plan!** It is imperative that you know and realize just that. God’s plans are not above you, they include you, they include us.

This was the message for the people of Israel in Micah’s day and it also the message for us today.

And the first thing that we always need to remember as we look at God’s plans and how we are a part of them is that they are often beyond our grasp of understanding. How often don’t we forget just how wide the scope of God’s plan is? We often judge each scenario that comes into our lives on an individual basis. This happens, so it must mean this. That happens, so it must mean this. And what result does that have? We are up; we are down; we worry; we stress over each new thing that comes in life.

That is exactly what the people of Israel were doing. They saw only the picture painted in verse 11 of Micah’s words, **“But now many nations are gathered against you. They say, “Let her be defiled, let our eyes gloat over Zion!”** That picture of blood-thirsty nations on the attack filled the people of Israel with fear. They saw the imminent destruction and that was all. But it was all part of God’s bigger plan. While Israel saw a game of checkers, the Lord was playing chess, doing all things for a greater purpose.

And in verse 12, he told the people that he was gathering the nations for a reason

beyond what they knew. **“But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord; they do not understand his plan, he who gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor.”** Often in the past, God had used the nations of the world to bring punishment on Israel. But a time was coming when God would use that lust for conquest and victory against people of this world. As they came to fight God’s people, they would see God’s power. He was using his people to gather the enemies of God together for a special purpose.

For the same reason, God uses us. For the ungodly, we are a lightning rod. The existence of people who speak the unbiased truth of God’s law are a rebuke to the pride of selfish, sinful people. Like those nations that wanted to destroy Israel, evil people long to silence God’s Word. Through their evil desires, God gathers his enemies just like the nations who were against Israel.

And as God gathers people, this is where he asks us to be part of the plan. Through Micah, God says, **“Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion.”** What does that mean? Well, Jesus gave the same command in different words to his New Testament church when he said, **“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”** The call to rise and thresh was a call to spread and preach the Word, even in the midst of opposition.

When God brings people before us, we are to use the powerful tools that he gives us. In Micah, he describes those tools as horns of iron and hoofs of bronze. They are tools that never wear down and provide all the strength that God’s people would ever need to do the work. From the New Testament, we know that these horns of iron and hoofs of bronze are the Law and the Gospel of God’s mighty, everlasting Word.

Where the Law and Gospel are preached, the job will get done and God’s plan will be carried out. The Law and the Gospel will separate the chaff from the grain, the scoffers and enemies from the believers. That double work of the Word is seen clearly in the work of John the Baptist, which we heard in the Gospel. On one hand, John said, **“Look! The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** On the other hand, he said, **“The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut down.”** His words served a double purpose and brought two results as people came and gathered before him. Because he did not back down, but spoke the Word clearly as it was needed, through his work, he was threshing as God described it in Micah.

This threshing that Micah spoke about, which Christ commanded and which John performed is the duty of all the people of Zion, all of the true people of Zion. This was the believers whom Micah spoke to in his day, before the Messiah came into the world. It is also the believers now whom Micah speaks to, the people of Zion who are waiting Christ’s second coming.

The words of Micah are clear. The plans and purposes of God are not above us, they include us. Individually, God calls each of us to rise and thresh. As a church, God calls us to rise and thresh. As a synod, God calls us to rise and thresh. Stand up and preach the Law and the Gospel wherever it is needed. It will always be impactful, it will always carry out God’s purpose. God is gathering, he asks you to rise and thresh. God has invited you to be a cog in carrying out his work. What a privilege that each and every one of us have, to not only know the plans of God, but to share in carrying them out. Don’t shrink from this task. Stand up to the challenge wherever it is presented. Rise and Thresh. Go and preach. Amen.