

## I.N.I.

Third Sunday in Pentecost

June 13, 2010

Micah 4:1-8

In Christ Jesus, the Head of the Church, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Church architecture sure has changed over the years. In the Middle Ages churches were long, large buildings with high ceilings, magnificent stained glass windows and steeples reaching high into the sky. In the early years of our country the country church was always seen from a distance because of its tall steeple and white painted sides and in the cities the churches also had high steeples with a long, narrow look with stained glass windows.

Today more and more churches are built in the round or semi-circle so that the altar and the pastor are more in the middle of the church rather than in the front with the people much closer. Stained glass windows still ordain some churches and steeples are quite often off to the side on a tower by itself, not on top of the church building.

The beauty of the different kinds of architecture is really in the eye of the beholder. Some may like the modern church look better than the past and others vice-versa. But the real beauty of the church is not found in the outside architecture but on the inside. It is found when one enters the church and hears the beautiful, sweet, saving message of the Gospel. No matter how beautiful the architecture is, if the message does not glorify Christ and proclaim sinners saved through Jesus there is no real beauty there.

The same can be said about the Church of Jesus Christ. The real beauty and glory is not found on the outside. In fact looking at the outside one does not see much glory or power or beauty at all. But when one is brought inside through faith in Christ then one sees the real glory, beauty, and majesty.

Our text from the prophet Micah answers for us the question—what benefits and blessings are there in our being a member of the Holy Christian Church? What is so great about being in Christ's Church?

This morning we have listed 4 spiritual blessings of the Church:

- 1) **GLORY**
- 2) **PEACE**
- 3) **STRENGTH**
- 4) **DOMINION**

We see in our first verse that Micah is speaking about the very same time period as Hosea was in last week's sermon study—the Last Days—the Messianic Age, the New Testament Era. In those days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established. Micah is talking about Mt. Zion, not physical Mt. Zion, one of the mountains in Jerusalem, but spiritual Zion, the Church.

The picture is not that this physical mountain will begin to rise up out of the ground higher and higher till it is the highest mountain peak in the world. No, Micah is speaking figuratively. Mt. Zion, the New Testament Church of believers will rise above every other kingdom and nation in leadership and glory. No other earthly kingdom can offer such blessings and benefits. No other kingdom is as glorious. The Church of Christ stands head and shoulders above all the rest.

And to this Mt. Zion men, women and children will stream. Again not a literal climbing up of a high mountain but a seeking after the Word of God. Micah writes: **MANY NATIONS SHALL COME AND SAY, "COME, AND LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD, TO THE HOUSE OF THE GOD OF JACOB; HE WILL TEACH US HIS WAYS, AND WE SHALL WALK IN HIS PATHS."**

We can see how this prophecy of Micah has come true. Europeans, Africans, Asians, Orientals, Americans have been streaming in large numbers to this kingdom. And why are they coming in droves to this mountain? Again our text says: **HE WILL TEACH US HIS WAYS, AND WE SHALL WALK IN HIS PATHS.**

## I: Glory—Word of God

His Word will go out from Zion, from Jerusalem, that is from the Church. It will be proclaimed by believers to all nations and people from every corner of the world and people from all nationalities will be brought into this kingdom. That is the Glory of the Church---**THE ALMIGHTY WORD OF GOD!**

The powerful Word that breaks down all physical barriers between people and unites them as one in Christ. The Law that condemns us all and shows us our sins and the Gospel announcement of forgiveness and salvation; justification through faith in Jesus' merits. The powerful Gospel that transforms hearts and lives to no longer live for the sinful flesh but creates a willing desire to live a God-pleasing life---sanctification through Christ's love. What a Glory this Church has. A powerful Word that condemns and destroys. A powerful Word that creates faith and saves. A powerful Word that brings forth fruits of faith to the Glory of the Savior-God who proclaimed it.

But why are we so sure that these words of Micah are figurative, not literal? Are we sure that he is not talking about a real mountain in Jerusalem to which all people of the world will someday flock; which will rise physically higher than any other mountain? We are sure because Scripture interprets Scripture---not man!

In Heb. 12:22-24 we read: **BUT YOU HAVE COME TO MOUNT ZION AND TO THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, TO AN INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF ANGELS, TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN WHO ARE REGISTERED IN HEAVEN, TO GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL, TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT, TO JESUS THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT, AND TO THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING THAT SPEAKS BETTER THINGS THAN *THAT OF ABEL*.**

Mt. Zion is the Church of all believers. Here on earth it is called the Church Militant---ever fighting for souls with the Gospel and in heaven it is called the Church Triumphant---the souls of the believers have conquered with Christ and are now safe with the Lord. Other mighty, powerful nations and kingdoms have come and gone and will continue to come and go but the Kingdom of God's grace—His Church will be established forever.

## II: PEACE--- Forgiveness of sins

A second spiritual blessing of being a member of the Church is having **PEACE**. Real Peace of heart and soul. And again Micah uses a physical picture to describe this peace. We read vs. 3: **HE SHALL JUDGE BETWEEN MANY PEOPLES, AND REBUKE STRONG NATIONS AFAR OFF; 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 ANY MORE.**

So will Israel and Palestine finally come to everlasting peace? Will there be peace on earth among nations? No! These words are not talking about political peace, a world of perfect love and harmony between nations. That kind of thinking contradicts the very words of the Prince of Peace, Jesus who said in Matt. 24:6-14: **AND YOU WILL HEAR OF WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS. SEE THAT YOU ARE NOT TROUBLED; FOR ALL *THESE THINGS* MUST COME TO PASS, BUT THE END IS NOT YET. FOR NATION WILL RISE AGAINST NATION, AND KINGDOM AGAINST KINGDOM. AND THERE WILL BE FAMINES, PESTILENCES, AND EARTHQUAKES IN VARIOUS PLACES. ALL *THESE ARE* THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS. THEN THEY WILL DELIVER YOU UP TO TRIBULATION AND KILL YOU, AND YOU WILL BE HATED BY ALL NATIONS FOR MY NAME'S SAKE. AND THEN MANY WILL BE OFFENDED, WILL BETRAY ONE ANOTHER, AND WILL HATE ONE ANOTHER. THEN MANY FALSE PROPHETS WILL RISE UP AND DECEIVE MANY. AND BECAUSE LAWLESSNESS WILL ABOUND, THE LOVE OF MANY WILL GROW COLD. BUT HE WHO ENDURES TO THE END SHALL BE SAVED. AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM WILL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD AS A WITNESS TO ALL THE NATIONS, AND THEN THE END WILL COME.**

Micah is still speaking of God's Kingdom of Grace established by the Word of God ruling in the hearts of His people. This is the gathering of the Holy Christian Church so that every Christian whether he or she lives in Cuba or Iraq, China or Libya are all brothers and sisters with us in Christ, members of His Kingdom of Peace. All believers in Christ are one in faith with our Savior and therefore one with each other enjoying the same peace---peace with God the Father because of the forgiveness of all their sins.

What Micah is talking about is far greater than an earthly treaty, some worldly declaration of ceasefire. It is the peace with God knowing that the wall of division has been removed, our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea and we are at one with God.

In vs. 4 we read of more spiritual examples of peace: **BUT EVERYONE SHALL SIT 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.** This peace of forgiveness is like sitting under the fig tree relaxed with no stress—free from fear and worries, cares and concerns, burdens and grief's. We have the peace that passes all understanding in our hearts.

Paul writes about this peace in Eph. 2:14-18: **FOR HE HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE, WHO HAS MADE BOTH ONE, AND HAS BROKEN DOWN THE MIDDLE WALL OF SEPARATION, HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH THE ENMITY, THAT IS, THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS CONTAINED IN ORDINANCES, SO AS TO CREATE IN HIMSELF ONE NEW MAN FROM THE TWO, THUS MAKING PEACE, AND THAT HE MIGHT RECONCILE THEM BOTH TO GOD IN ONE BODY THROUGH THE CROSS, THEREBY PUTTING TO DEATH THE ENMITY. AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE AFAR OFF AND TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR. FOR THROUGH HIM WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS BY ONE SPIRIT TO THE FATHER.**

In vs. 5 Micah says: **FOR ALL PEOPLE WALK EACH IN THE NAME OF HIS GOD, BUT WE WILL WALK IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD FOREVER AND EVER.** Unbelievers walk in the names of their gods—the imaginations of their minds---gods that reflect the faults, failures and frustrations of their creators. They can't help. They don't even exist. The Lord says in Jeremiah 10: **FOR THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLES ARE FUTILE; FOR ONE CUTS A TREE FROM THE FOREST, THE WORK OF THE HANDS OF THE WORKMAN, WITH THE AX. THEY DECORATE IT WITH SILVER AND GOLD; THEY FASTEN IT WITH NAILS AND HAMMERS SO THAT IT WILL NOT TOPPLE. THEY ARE UPRIGHT, LIKE A PALM TREE, AND THEY CANNOT SPEAK; THEY MUST BE CARRIED, BECAUSE THEY CANNOT GO BY THEMSELVES. DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEM, FOR THEY CANNOT DO EVIL, NOR CAN THEY DO ANY GOOD.**

But we believers walk in the name of the LORD—Jehovah firmly trusting in His grace, forgiveness and salvation. Our Triune God created us, we did not create Him. Our Savior-God redeemed us; we did not earn our own salvation. And our Sanctifying God has called us out of the darkness of sin and unbelief to faith in Jesus; we did not choose to believe.

### **III: Strength—Jesus Christ**

#### **IV: Dominion—Rule with Christ**

Two last blessings are **STRENGTH** and **DOMINION**. We read vs. 6-7: **IN THAT DAY," SAYS THE LORD, "I WILL ASSEMBLE THE LAME, I WILL GATHER THE OUTCAST AND THOSE WHOM I HAVE AFFLICTED; I WILL MAKE THE LAME A REMNANT, AND THE OUTCAST A STRONG NATION; SO THE LORD WILL REIGN OVER THEM IN MOUNT ZION FROM NOW ON, EVEN FOREVER.**

Who are the lame? This word literally means "to limp." It is the same word used for Jacob's limping after having wrestled with the Lord. It is a reference to man's weakness—his sins. The outcast are those who because of their sins were cast out, exiled from Israel. Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden because of their sin of disobedience. Here the Lord through Micah is saying that the Lord will

bring a remnant of these sinful human beings and formerly outcast sinners and turn them into a strong nation over which the Lord will reign forever and ever. Again the Lord is speaking about His Church.

Just like limping Jacob came forth from his wrestling match with God a stronger man, yes, even a conqueror, having learned to take God at His Word, to trust Him totally and to hold Him to His promises—so also every, weak sinner who believes in Jesus is more than a conqueror through Him that loved them—that is Christ. Like Paul we can declare: **I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!** The Strength of this kingdom is **CHRIST!**

Finally we see that even as the nation of Israel was ruled by King David, so now spiritual Israel, the Church of all believers will be ruled with spiritual David—the Lord Jesus Christ. We will rule together with our Lord and Savior. We read vs. 8: **AND YOU, O TOWER OF THE FLOCK, THE STRONGHOLD OF THE DAUGHTER OF ZION, TO YOU SHALL IT COME, EVEN THE FORMER DOMINION SHALL COME, THE KINGDOM OF THE DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM.**

The Watchtower of the flock---the Good Shepherd has come. The Stronghold of the Daughter of Zion—the Rock of Ages has appeared. The kingdom and dominion has come to the Daughter of Jerusalem. All of these statements mean that the King of kings Jesus Christ rules His Church. He rules in the hearts of His believers, in your heart and mine through His powerful word of love and forgiveness. And we rule together with Him in His Word and in His kingdom here on earth and forever in eternity.

That's what we see inside our church. From the outside, from the unbeliever's point of view, there is little use for the Church—little power, no blessings, no glory, no future. There is little reason to follow a Man who lived 2,000 years ago. Those who reject Christ do not have the eyes of faith to see the spiritual blessings of the believer.

**GLORY**---God's Word which creates faith and moves us to live for Christ.

**PEACE**---The Good News of forgiveness, life and salvation.

**STRENGTH**---Jesus Christ living in us, making us conquerors over temptations and troubles.

**DOMINION**---Ruling with Christ as princes and priests in His kingdom.

What blessings, what benefits which all will culminate into a perfect eternity in heaven. Thank God, the Holy Spirit has led us to go inside the Church, to see it not just as outsiders, onlookers and visitors, but has brought us in and through the Word made us members of His Church to be able to see with awe and wonder the beauty, the glory and the power of it all, to enjoy not only for time but for all eternity.

Amen.