



SERMON - Who is a pardoning God like Thee?

The prophet Micah is feeling a bit low - and that is an understatement! He has arrived too late at the party - or in his own language - he has come to the vineyard to pick the ripe, choice summer bunches of grapes, but it is as if the Summer has ended, the vines have been picked clean and all that is left is the odd, sad little bunch here and there of what ASDA would call their 'Wonky Fruit'

Something has happened, and it has happened too early! Some terrible greed, it seems, has driven the people to take all they could before it was ready, for fear of losing it all to others.

Micah goes on with his countryside theme as it were, to describe those amongst the people who should have been the upright, tall, righteous leaders as nothing but blackberry bushes and thorns - and wild blackberry bushes, like those vines, do not yield any amount of good fruit! You end up torn and scratched more than the worth of it when you try to deal with them!

It is a sorry picture indeed. Even at the local, village and family levels all trust has been lost and no-one trusts anyone. - not even, says Micah, Man and Wife!

Yet Micah can remember the old days, and knows that the promise given back then, and held so dear for so many generations since Jacob and even Abraham's days is a sure promise, because he knows the One who has promised is Faithful!

So he tells the enemy to make the most of his opportunity to gloat over Micah's misery while he can, for things will change, and even this will pass. The prophet (God's Prophet for his day) may be sat in darkness and unable to see the light, but he knows it will come! Clouds do not stop the sun from shining and neither has God completely forgotten His People. Micah sets an example of repentance (confession followed by a turning round of heart) and is content for now to sit in the darkness and await the Lord's light, the Lord's Righteousness. Micah knows that he, himself, is powerless to change even his own state, but he trusts his Lord to turn from Judge to Counsellor and Mediator and then to lead His People with the care of a Shepherd for His Sheep who leads them to Bashan and Gilead - verdant lands of plenty, not the wildernesses of trial.

Why is Micah so sure of this? Well, because he, like Jonah the prophet and preacher to Nineveh, knows his God to be a 'Pardoning God - 'Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of his inheritance?! You do not always stay angry, but you delight to show mercy'

Jonah's problem was that he knew God too well, and knew that if even the Ninevites repented they would find His Mercy - and Jonah didn't want that. But the only way Jonah, or Micah, or you and me, can know that for certain is if we have first experienced his mercy for ourselves -

Then we will join with Micah in that refrain...

'Who is a pardoning God like Thee, or who has Grace, so rich and free!

Amen.