

Devotion 36:

## **Our Father Is Unlike Other Gods**

Micah 1—7

The name “Micah” means “Who is like the Lord?” It is very fitting for the theme of his book. Like the other prophets, Micah predicts the fall of Israel and of Judah. He speaks against the evil, corruption, and idolatry among the children of God. But, like the other prophets, he also speaks of hope.

*“In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’” 4:1-2*

*“‘In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The Lord will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.’” 4: 6-7*

His hopeful words point directly to Jesus, our Savior and Lord:

*“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. Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace.” 5:2-5*

And it is this clear Messianic prophecy that leads Micah to conclude his book with a vivid description of how our Father is unlike any other god. Read the following carefully and note the differences between our God and false gods:

*“Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” 7:18-19*

First, our Father pardons sin and forgives transgressions. If you stop and think about it, all other gods, all false idols, are very unforgiving. They are exact and demanding. In an

earlier devotion, I wrote of the qualities of good parenting. The very worst parenting style is high control and low support. That describes an idol.

Second, our Father does not stay angry forever. On the contrary, false gods move among us and spread nothing but fear. We fear we won't have enough (of whatever the false god is promoting). We fear we might get caught (pursuing the false god).

Third, our Father delights to show mercy. *Webster's Dictionary* defines *mercy* like this: "compassion or forbearance shown to an offender; lenient treatment." It implies forbearing punishment even when justice demands it. And so with our Father "*mercy triumphs over judgment!*" (James 2:13b)

As we have seen so often in these attributes of our Father, He desires that we share in them and that we exude the very same qualities to others. Hence, Micah 6:8:

*"He has showed you, O man, 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."*

In other words, like Father, like son. So much of the New Testament will exhort us children to imitate our Father in forgiving others, not letting the sun go down on our anger, and showing mercy. And this kind of father is exactly what the world desperately needs but doesn't believe it has. The ways of the world are completely opposite of the ways of our Father: the world keeps score, rather than forgives; the world maintains a blind rage, rather than removes bitterness; and the world punishes endlessly, rather than shows mercy.

How blessed we are to have a Father who is not like other gods.