

His Mercy, Class 4: The Prophets

Calling Israel Back to God's Heart

- I. Where we are at in the story...
 - A. God created a world of abundance, where His mercy reigned
 - B. Image bearers fell to believing in scarcity & withholding mercy from one another...
 - C. ...nonetheless, God partnered with Abraham, then Israel, in His mercy and for restoring mercy
 - D. Yet, Israel still desires to be like the other nations, casting aside God's teaching about mercy
- II. Punk Rock Prophets
 - A. *Prophets are Truth-Tellers* - revealed the distance between Israel and God's heart. God spoke through them to urge repentance and give hope. Somewhat like contemporary punk rock bands, the prophets "told the truth" about social ills, idolatry, suffering, and injustice in their day and age.
 - B. *Calling Israel back to God's heart for mercy* - In Micah 6, God reminds Israel of the good he has shown them in redeeming them from slavery in Egypt and the wilderness, hoping that they won't just give Him vain offerings but that they will "love mercy." Similarly, Hosea points out the truth of God's desire for mercy over ritual (Hosea 6:6).
 - C. *Concrete & Collective* - God's message through the prophets was direct & not afraid to lump all of Israel together in calling out injustice. (e.g. Isaiah 1:15-17, Amos 2:6-8, Zechariah 7:8-10). As the prophets told the truth about Israel's injustice, do any of these charges connect with you?

*We got legal weed that'll keep us high
'Round the world other people die
Where on earth is my wife?
Our stomachs full and our pockets fat
I need love—there's a site for that
I had more when I had less
I think I got too comfortable*

- Andy Mineo in his song "Uncomfortable" (a sort of modern day "prophetic critique")

Activity -Self Prophetic Critique

In our contemporary discourse, it is so easy to point our fingers to critique everyone else around us. Instead, take 5 minutes to form a prophetic critique of yourself!

You can use poetry, imagery, metaphor, etc. to imagine how God might tell you the truth about your need to repent and embrace His heart for mercy. Idolatry, materialism, neglect, care for the poor, and more could be areas of life to reflect on.

Examples: Jer. 13:1-11, Amos 5:11-12

- III. Hope for Mercy - *Do you know a verse from the prophets that brings hope?*
- A. *God will teach His people mercy* - Jeremiah 31:31-34 describes a time when God would write His law on the hearts of His people, enabling them to be merciful. Ezekiel 37:1-14 describes this in vivid imagery of God's breath bringing a pile of skeletons back to life – a parallel to God's Spirit filling Christians to be people of life and mercy, both now and in the age to come.
 - B. *God's restoration of mercy would come through a servant* - Isaiah 42:1-4, among other scriptures, points to one to come who would usher in the age of God's Spirit. This servant will bring justice to the nations, which carries the inevitable weight of judgment, but ultimately restores God's vision of mercy on earth.
- IV. Discussion: *Imagining the Age to Come & Improvising in the present*

Read Isaiah 11:1-9

What do you notice about the one in the prophecy?

What does he do & what qualities does he display?

What is the scope of what he accomplishes?

What is the significance of all these animals living at peace together?

How does this shape the values and mission of God's people today?

What might it look like to bring this reality to our communities today?