



On your marks

We don't often look at the stories in the minor prophets with our children's group or as part of an all-age celebration. The complex historical references in these books, the violent imagery and the themes are largely too sombre and heavy. They're not easy to digest whatever our age! However, these spokespeople for God, living as they did in faithless times, dared to speak out for justice and for God's truth. In their day, these prophets weren't popular. They were voices from the edge that no one wanted to hear. Nevertheless, they tackled important issues at the heart of what faith is all about, then and today: they challenged empty religious practices, the neglect of the poor and marginalised; they reminded people of the need for honesty and integrity in public affairs, and that loving your neighbour is at the heart of loving God.

Traditionally, passages from the prophets help us to get ready for the season of Christmas during the time of Advent. Their message is one of warning and judgement but also hope, promise and love. Their words remind us that God does not turn a blind eye to the mess we have made of our lives and his world, and they recognise that this will need to be accounted for one day. Nevertheless, God's love for us is so great that he wants us to turn away from what is spoiling everything and find instead his power to help us change. This power to begin again is wrapped up in the gift of himself as Jesus at Christmas and so these prophets, in a way beyond their knowing, are also pointing to the coming king who will change everything.

Get set

This is part of a mini Advent series that offers a way to get ready for the events of Christmas by exploring the messages from three of the minor prophets in a way that is accessible for all-ages. This session focuses on Micah, the prophet of judgement and hope. See also: [Amos - judgement and justice](#) and [Hosea - judgement and love](#).

Each prophet's story contains material for a session and includes: background on the prophet; a key passage to read together; some questions; an idea for a visual aid; an activity; a prayer idea; a key verse to take away; and a link to the mystery of Christmas. This material could be used for a session with your children's group or as inspiration for an all-age celebration.

For a storytelling version of Hosea, see The Barnabas Children's Bible (story 193).

Go!

Background

Micah's chief complaint about the people of Israel was that they had broken both the first and second commandments. They had trusted in their wealth and weaponry rather than in God; they had made images to worship, which had become idols, which had tricked them into thinking they could control God. Like fellow prophet Amos, Micah was angry about the way true religion was being



corrupted, which had led to the poor being exploited. But Micah was also a voice of hope and foresaw a day when God would transform everything

Key passage

The Lord said to his people: Come and present your case to the hills and mountains. Israel, I am bringing charges against you - I call upon the mountains and the earth's firm foundation to be my witnesses.

My people, have I wronged you in any way at all? Please tell me. I rescued you from Egypt, where you were slaves. I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to be your leaders. Don't forget the evil plans of King Balak of Moab or what Balaam son of Beor said to him. Remember how I, the Lord, saved you many times on your way from Acacia to Gilgal.

What offering should I bring when I bow down to worship the Lord God Most High? Should I try to please him by sacrificing calves a year old? Will thousands of sheep or rivers of olive oil make God satisfied with me? Should I sacrifice to the Lord my firstborn child as payment for my terrible sins? The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: 'See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.'

Micah 6:1-8 (CEV)

Questions

- What in the passage makes you think there was sadness in God's voice?
- How has God shown his love for his people?
- How had the people tried to please God in their worship? What was wrong with this?
- What sort of worship was God looking for?
- What would you say is the most important aspect of worshipping God?
- Is worship something that just happens in a church service?

Visual aid

Micah ends his prophecy with a powerful picture of how God can take away all that has spoiled our lives. Our sins are thrown into the depths of the sea - out of harm's way and out of sight (Micah 7:18-20).

Cut up some plain Vitamin C tablets and drop the pieces into water. Watch as they fizz away and then disappear, and then how slowly the water returns to be clear again, as it was at the beginning.

Activity idea

In Micah 4:1-5, there is a vision of heaven where everything will be put right again. Jerusalem is symbolically at its heart (as in Revelation 21) and it will be a place of peace. This must have been an attractive and powerful image for the people of Israel at the time, caught between warring nations



and often threatened with military defeat.

Straighten out some pieces of fuse wire or paper clips and turn them first into weapons – guns, swords and spears. Then remake them into useful tool, just as the vision says will happen when God comes to reign. What model tools can you make?

Prayer idea

In Micah 5:1-5, Micah holds out the hope of a special king, who will come one day. He will take care of his people like a shepherd with his flock.

Create a model sheepfold using some everyday objects as the fencing. Then, for each of your prayers, place a cotton-wool ball (a sheep) inside to represent putting your trust in Jesus the good shepherd.

Key verse

The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: 'See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.'

Micah 6:8

The Christmas link

When the angels sang to the shepherds, they foretold that the baby would bring peace on earth, and that the baby would be found in Bethlehem, which is exactly what Micah has predicted centuries before.

This very day in King David's home town a Saviour was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. You will know who he is, because you will find him dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay.'

Suddenly many other angels came down from heaven and joined in praising God. They said: 'Praise God in heaven! Peace on earth to everyone who pleases God.'

Luke 2:11-14