

### **Micah 4:1-5 [MSG]**

<sup>1-4</sup> But when all is said and done,  
God's Temple on the mountain,  
Firmly fixed, will dominate all mountains,  
towering above surrounding hills.  
People will stream to it  
and many nations set out for it,  
Saying, "Come, let's climb God's mountain.  
Let's go to the Temple of Jacob's God.  
He will teach us how to live.  
We'll know how to live God's way."  
True teaching will issue from Zion,  
God's revelation from Jerusalem.  
He'll establish justice in the rabble of nations  
and settle disputes in faraway places.  
They'll trade in their swords for shovels,  
their spears for rakes and hoes.  
Nations will quit fighting each other,  
quit learning how to kill one another.  
Each man will sit under his own shade tree,  
each woman in safety will tend her own garden.  
God-of-the-Angel-Armies says so,  
and he means what he says.  
<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, all the other people live however they wish,  
picking and choosing their gods.  
But we live honoring God,  
and we're loyal to our God forever and ever.

### **A mountain to climb**

As I look around, I see all the flags, the banners, the tartans. All of these are symbols of clans, of families, and of people. All of these symbols are displayed in the hopes of receiving a blessing.

It makes me think about the Apostle Paul in Ephesus – he was visiting, and so full of the power of the spirit that people were bringing him their handkerchiefs and aprons to touch, which they then brought home and used to heal their sick ones. The touch from Paul carried in the apron was enough, people were healed and families were made whole.

We are all hungry for a blessing; we live in a fallen world. There is great beauty, and there is love to be found, but this world is marred; it is tainted by violence and by death. We need a blessing – every one of us.

We look back to what this kirkin represents and remembers, those days after the final Jacobite uprising where we find repression of the people by government forces, but we also see the hope of the people. We see the crushing curse from worldly powers countered by heavenly blessings.

In this age of diversity we might ask – is it right for us to pick out one culture to celebrate this Sunday? Aren't we excluding everyone else? I'm not Scottish, I'm Danish. Is this remembrance for me also? When we see that the heart of this remembrance is the fact that one culture was not allowing another culture to express itself – that the clans were not able to wear the tartans that were their very identity – we see that this particular remembrance is in fact a celebration of diversity. We use the example of the Jacobite Scots to remind us that religious and cultural oppression in all forms is something to be resisted.

In our present culture, as we discuss the place of the niqab, turbans, tribal tattoos and gender expression in various forms we do well to remember the Jacobites. We do well to remind ourselves that oppression – however well intentioned, because some of it is well intentioned – oppression was never a part of God’s plan for us. In fact, every one of the prophets God sent to his people decried the oppression present in society and warned that oppression leads only to destruction.

So, our purpose in this morning’s kirkin is not to exclude, but rather to include. To invite us all to a full expression of our very selves. We seek a blessing this morning, a blessing for all of us.

When God chose Abram from all the peoples of the earth, he said ‘go to the land I will show you.’ He called Abram, not to a place, but to a path. God’s didn’t so much call Abraham to be in a certain location, but to walk in a certain way. God called Abram to a way of life.

This is similar to what we heard in Micah’s prophecy this morning.

But when all is said and done,  
God’s Temple on the mountain,  
Firmly fixed, will dominate all mountains,  
towering above surrounding hills.  
People will stream to it  
and many nations set out for it,  
Saying, “Come, let’s climb God’s mountain.  
Let’s go to the Temple of Jacob’s God.  
He will teach us how to live.  
We’ll know how to live God’s way.”

As the nations stream toward the mountain they are seeking not just a place – they are climbing God’s mountain so that God will teach them how to live, so that they can learn to live in God’s way.

What is God’s way that these people hope to learn on God’s mountain? What is the way of walking that God taught Abram? What is it that the Lord requires of us?

Fortunately, these are not abstract unanswerable questions. We know God’s way to live because God himself came to earth to model this life. Jesus came into the battlefield of this world, not for his own glory and honour, but for we who are here. He came to die, and so condemn sin and death, and he came to rise, to declare the victory of life.

What we see is that Jesus came, he received his blessing at his baptism, and then he shared it with all of creation. This is the same thing that God told Abram:

‘I’ll make you a great nation  
and bless you.  
I’ll make you famous;  
you’ll be a blessing.  
I’ll bless those who bless you;  
those who curse you I’ll curse.  
All the families of the Earth  
will be blessed through you.’

The blessing that we seek today is exactly the same. Our blessing is not for us to hold; it is for us to share. The handkerchiefs are meant for touching other people, not ourselves. We aren’t to seek our own glory, but the welfare of others.

This brings us to another remembrance. We remember the Jacobites as soldiers, and we remember our own soldiers today as well. We can say what we like about whether war is necessary, or if armed conflict is permissible, but once it is happening around us we depend on our soldiers.

Jesus' great salvific act was a willing sacrifice of his own life for the lives of others. He stood in the path of evil and took the force of its violence into his own flesh, so that others would not have to. This is what our men and women do – they face off against totalitarianism, despotism and oppression and say 'this far and no further – you shall not pass.'

This sacrificial living epitomizes Jesus' example to us; it takes God's word to Abram to heart: we are blessed to be a blessing to others. Jesus led the way. In his death, Jesus demonstrated sacrifice. In his resurrection, Jesus demonstrated that death does not have the final word.

This example of Jesus is not only our invitation to live for others, but an assurance that we can be free to die for others as well. We will be taking some time a little later in the service to remember those who have made this sacrifice, who have climbed this mountain before us.

And now we come back to the beginning. We are all hungry for a blessing. This blessing is for us, and it is for us to share. We are not a light under a basket, but a light on a hill. As we climb God's mountain, as we learn to live God's way, we shine for others to follow. We invite all the nations of the world, all the people from every corner of the globe to climb with us in the life that God has promised, life abundant.

Let's prepare for a blessing.