

## • Sermon: Micah 3. “Building kingdoms”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at [www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

### • What kingdom are you building?

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They're building a child care centre next door to us at the moment – it's a big house. And when I look over the fence, it's obvious what they're building. They're laying foundations. Putting in plumbing. Pouring concrete. You can SEE what they're building. You can see the outline of the shape of the building. And for our building work here at church, you can have a look at the plans and SEE what we're building. We can SEE what it will look like. We can SEE what it's going to be.

- What about your life?

What are you building with your life? Have you ever asked yourself that question? What am I building in my life? What does my life look like? Or maybe you're looking back at your life and asking the question: What **have** I built? What **have** I made of my life?

And I think we should also ask this question as a church. What are **we** building here at All Saints? What are we making together? When people look at our church, what do they see? Not the physical buildings - but this community – what are we about? Who are we?

So that's our question today: What are we building? In our personal lives, and as a church, what are we building?

### • 1. The real story

In chapter 3, Micah shows us the leadership of Israel, and what they're building. And what Micah sees, what God sees, is a group of leaders and prophets and priests and rich people building a great city. Jerusalem had become a great city. Powerful and wealthy. (2 Kings 18:16) They're successful and prosperous.

But Micah tells us the real story behind their wealth. Let's go forward to verse 9 to have a look at the problem:

- <sup>9</sup> *Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right;*  
<sup>10</sup> *who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness.*  
<sup>11</sup> *Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money.*  
*Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."*

They're building Jerusalem, Zion, with bloodshed and wickedness. They're building this great city, and you could step back and see all that they had built and it was impressive. Successful. Amazing. But they had built it with the blood of their own people.

Judges being bribed. Priests charging people for their teaching. Prophets telling good fortunes for money.

On the outside it all looked impressive, but on the inside, it was evil. They had built a great city by ignoring God and taking advantage of their own people. YET, they leaned on God and said: God will protect us! No disaster will come on us!

Micah gives us some pretty horrible details of what they were doing. First, there are the rulers, the judges, verse 3

- *who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones;*

The leaders SHOULD know justice. But they don't. They tear the skin off their own people. In other words, they take every last piece of their wealth and property and chew them up and spit them out. They take everything from them and leave them with nothing.

Then there are the prophets, the ones who were supposed to bring God's messages to Israel. Verse 5:

- *"<sup>5</sup>...if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace';  
if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him.*

If you paid a prophet enough, he would give you good news. If you didn't pay him, he would give you bad news!

Micah paints a pretty terrible picture of what was happening in Israel. The leaders were taking advantage of their own people and ignoring God. But WHY? WHY were they doing it?

- **To build their own kingdom.**

The rich people and the leaders and the prophets were building Jerusalem for themselves. From the outside, Jerusalem looked impressive and strong, able to stand up against the attacks of their enemies. But inside, it was a place where people were being abused and destroyed.

And God says to Israel, verse 12:

- <sup>12</sup> *Therefore because of you, Zion will be ploughed like a field,  
Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.*

God will take it all away. It will be completely destroyed. The kingdom THEY have built will be taken away. Because they've ignored God and done it all for themselves. Let's ask ourselves that question again:

- 1. What are we building?
  - **First, as a church:**

What are we building? When the world sees our life, our community here, our **church** – what do they see? Do we treat each other well? Do we care for each other? Do we know justice? Do we love good and hate evil? And even with this **physical** building work we're doing – is it just for us? Is it for our own comfort and gain? Or are we serving others? How are we as a church, using our resources, our gifts, our assets, our time, to show the love of Jesus? Do we care about children? The elderly? The sick? The mentally ill? Or do we just look after the rich and impressive people?

And look at the WAY we do things – are we just nice people? Good people? Or will we be seen as people who are serving Jesus? What's the difference between our church and the Lions Club? Or a school community? Are we different? Are we building a kingdom for nice people? Or are we building a kingdom for God? Is the Jesus reflected in what we do?

And what about our church leaders? Are they building their own kingdom? Their own church? Or are they serving in a way that builds up God's church?

- **Second, as individuals:**

In our daily lives – what are we building? The way we act and live, the way we treat others, the way we work – is it all about OUR kingdom? Or is it about **God's** kingdom? Does our kingdom come first? Or does God's?

It's very easy to build our own kingdom. It's very easy to live a life that just builds things for ourselves. Israel would not listen to the warnings of the prophets. Instead they went on building their own kingdom.

What about us? Will **we** listen to God's word? Because if we're listening to God's Word, we will be reminded of that question each day – "Whose kingdom am I building?"

Reflect on what you've done in the past week or two. How are you building **his** kingdom in your life? 4 examples:

- **1. Prayer:** The first and most important thing. Are you praying? Or are other things keeping you away from this very important kingdom work? What needs to be rearranged in your life to spend time building **God's** kingdom with prayer?
- **2. Your gifts:** What gifts do you have for building up God's kingdom? Are you using them? Hospitality, leadership, music, teaching, administration, cleaning, cooking, pastoral care, welcoming... How have you used your gifts in the past week to build **God's** kingdom?
- **3. Resources:** What are your resources? Property? Money? Time? How have you used your resources in the past week to build **God's** kingdom? This is not just about WHAT you own, or what you DECIDE to own, but HOW you use those things, and how you prioritise those things. Are they for your kingdom, or God's?
- **4. Power:** a strange one. But certainly a major issue for Israel in this passage. Some of us have positions of power in this world. Positions of authority and influence. Teachers in classrooms, politicians in government, leaders in churches, fathers and mothers with their children – how are you using that position of authority or influence for building the kingdom of God?

Look at your whole life. What does it reflect? What are you building? How are you using your life, your gifts, your resources, your power... what kingdom is being built with those things? It's not just about WHAT you do with what you have. It's about HOW you prioritise. What kingdom has priority in your life?

The lesson God has for Israel is simply this: If you continue to build your own kingdom, it will be taken away.

As Jesus says in Matthew 6:33 –

- *"seek first his kingdom and his righteousness"*

Let's pray.