

Pastor T.C. Arnold
3rd Sunday after Trinity
Micah 7:18-20
June 20th, 2010

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain His anger forever; because he delights in steadfast love... You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham.

These are the words of the Prophet Micah. How pleasing and comforting these words are to our ears and hearts. But Micah didn't always talk like this. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and he had a way of speaking doom and gloom to those who were forsaking the work of the Lord. Some of the major themes in Micah are: Warnings to Israel, Verdict against Samaria and Jerusalem, the coming destruction, and the oracle of woe. These words don't sound so comforting and pleasing do they? These words weigh heavy on our heart. These words pronounce judgment and condemnation on those to whom Micah was addressing. And they conjure up images of the same for us today, too. Words like this make us think of the poor tax collector who stood in the temple beating his breast and not even able to look up into heaven while praying, *"God, be merciful to me, a sinner."*

But joy of the Christian life is the knowledge that we don't remain in the condition of the tax collector in the temple. Our Savior brings us full circle. He brings us back to where His love and forgiveness would have us to be. He brings us back to life. And because there is no God like our God, we can sing with confidence a hymn like, Lord, to You I Make Confession – today's Hymn of the Day – and be honest and absolutely certain that God hears us and that our sins are forgiven. If God can forgive such a poor miserable sinner like the tax collector at the temple – could He not also forgive you? Yes, and He has! We can be confident of this – even though I know sometimes we aren't. Sometimes our sins seem too overwhelming. Sometimes our sorrows dominate our lives. Sometimes we are more prone to ask questions that begin with the words, "I wonder if..." (I wonder if God still cares. I wonder if God is listening to me. I wonder if God would even consider forgiving what I have done).

Do you ever get the, "I wonder ifs"? I really think this is what that father who had a son with an "unclean spirit" was struggling with when Jesus asked him, *"Do you believe all things are possible for the one who believes?"* And the father answers, *"I believe, help me with my unbelief!"* The father did believe but struggled with his faith at times. I think such a thing is pretty much indicative of you and me as well. "Father in heaven, I believe, but I wonder if..." "Father, I know you are in charge and control of all things, but I wonder if..." Have you ever talked to God like this? Has doubt ever crossed your mind wondering if God could do it – WOULD do it? We find ourselves saying what the father of that boy said, *"Lord, I believe. Help me in my unbelief."* It's strange how we sort of live in this dual life – struggling, at times, between the belief and unbelief. There seems to be a fine line at times.

I will tell you what also there is a fine line between – there is a fine line between the "I wonder ifs" in life and the "I know it for sures". In this world we live in today most people won't even begin to acknowledge that there is such a thing as a "I know it for sure." The reason: there is no "for sure" thing out there anymore. The world believes that truth is what you make it out to be. Truth is relative and pertinent to each individual person. Maybe that's because today we are so careful to be politically correct and "non-offensive" to all people – we have gone as far as to say, "Who are we to even say that our faith is the one true faith?" That is seen as an offensive statement. Our "I know it for sure" statements are called into question by our

“informed” society because in today’s age, people think they know better because there is more to know out there.

Recently some startling statistics were shared regarding “what people know” and how much information the average person comes across in today’s day and age. Experts have said that every two to three years, the knowledge base in our world today doubles. I have heard others say that the knowledge base doubles every year to 6 months. Every day, 7,000 scientific and technical articles are published. Satellites orbiting the globe send enough data to fill 19 million volumes in the Library of Congress – every two weeks. High School graduates have been exposed to more information than their grandparents were in a lifetime. It is said that there will be as much change in the next three decades as there were in the last three centuries (from Pres. Mirly’s “Change” document shared with the circuit pastors). There is so much stuff out there today – people hear and experience change with information so much – it’s no wonder that people question if there ever could be a “I know it for sure” anymore.

But there is an “I know it for sure.” With all the information and all the change that is happening to you and your neighbor and your community, I know for sure that there is something that hasn’t changed and will never change. We know for sure that the truth of the Bible is the truth – because it hasn’t change. Our knowledge of the world might change with the next satellite picture sent from space to NASA. Our knowledge of medicine, how the human body functions, how to best educate students may change. But the Word of God never changes. It never has and it never will. That one truth has remained constant. So, truth does not depend on what other people think is truth. Truth will give us confidence to say “I know it for sure” – when it comes to the unchanged and true Word of God.

So it’s not an “I wonder if” about anything that God has promised. It’s not an “I wonder if” about who is God or where is God. We know for sure who God is and where He is. And that means we can add something else to this discussion. We can add this statement: “I know He will.”

I know for sure and I know He will. I know He will be with me always to the very end of the age because I’m sure about God’s Word and promise. I know He will be with me in the midst of the changes and chances of life because I know for sure. I know He will be by my bedside when I’m ill. I know He will take care of me when my job is in jeopardy or my life is going down the toilet. I know He will see me through and give me the strength and confidence that nothing is impossible with God – all because I know for sure.

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? That God is a God like Jesus who would do anything for us – and He did. He does not retain His anger forever; because he delights in steadfast love... I know for sure God does not “retain” His anger. Otherwise He would not keep on forgiving you and me of all our sins as we bring them before the cross of Christ. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham. This is what I know for sure. This is where we get our “I know He will” for the very reason that He already has. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.