

Sermon 16

St Philip and St James
Palma de Mallorca Spain
14th November 2021
Remembrance Sunday

**Theme: Beating Swords into Ploughshares
and Spears into Pruning Hooks: The
Greatest Gift Humanity will ever Receive.**



TEXT: Micah 4:1-5

Introduction

In the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Today is a special day; it is the second Sunday of November, the day set aside by the church to commemorate the Remembrance Day. This year's Remembrance Sunday is being celebrated after the actual day which is the 11th November and this is an unusual scenario. This is the day commonwealth member states and other states outside the commonwealth remember the end of

First World War which ended on the **11th Hour**, the **11th day** in the **11th month** of 1918. Rosecrans Baldwin (American Novelist) writes, “to be human is to have a collection of memories that tells you who you are and how you get there.” We are gathered here today because we have collections of memories that inform us of our past, how we got there and alert us of our future. My sermon is based on the first reading, Micah 4:1-5. The prophecies of Micah were directed to both cities of Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital city of the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) and Jerusalem was the capital city of the Southern Kingdom (Judah). We are not provided with more information about the prophet’s biography, except that he was active during the reign of the Judean kings, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. That makes Micah the contemporary of Isaiah. His prophetic messages reflect a time of political and social crises, such as the Syro-Ephraimite War and the fall of Samaria which was expected. This becomes a more relevant text as we gather to reflect on wars, ceasefires, peace and casualties of war. Today, we remember not only the British but the fallen from every nation from all the wars: over 20

million (8.5 million armed forces and 13 million civilians) who died in the First World War between 28th July 1914 and 11th November 1918; over 80 million (majority civilians) who died in the Second World War between 1st September 1939 to the 2nd September 1945; and other millions of people who died in various wars that happened after the Second World War. What about millions of people who were displaced from their homes? What about the devastating effects of war on flora and fauna? Yes, we have horrible memories of the atrocities of wars but there is something to cherish from the message of Micah.

Exegesis of the Text

Micah 4:1-3 is repeated in **Isaiah 2:1-3** and since the two were contemporary prophets, it is not surprising that the same spirit of the Lord could give them the same word, to establish and emphasize His word. Some theologians refer to Micah's message as a prophetic jump. Why prophetic jump? In the first three chapters of Micah, God established the grounds for judgment of the whole of Israel. Then in the fourth chapter, there is the promise of restoration. The message of restoration comes on the tail of the pronouncement of judgment and that is a big jump. The opening phrase of the oracle, **“in the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains,”** is significant to the whole message that follows. The idea of the mountain is a place in God's presence. It is something analogous to the kingdom of God. The mountain is a place to meet God. God is on high separated from human beings so that a mountain is a good figurative image of this meeting place. Many nations will stream to this mountain and God will teach the nations his ways. In the eyes of the prophet, the nations will stream into Jerusalem to meet with the

Lord God and to know him better. Significantly, God will judge between the nations and settle their disputes. There will be no more war. There will still be conflicts between nations and individuals, but they will be justly and decisively resolved by the messiah and those who reign with Him. This new state of affairs is vividly captured in verses 3b and 3c, **“they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”** This is not the peace of capitulation. This is the peace of enforced righteousness. It is not a peace enforced by guns of stronger opponents but sustainable peace coming out from a righteous heart. There will be no more war; no need of swords and therefore it makes sense to turn weapons of war into farming implements. We long for such a day when there is no more need of a military budget.

In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt gave a famous speech about four freedoms; freedom of speech; freedom of war; freedom of want and freedom from fear. David Guzik made an interesting comparison between Roosevelt’s speech and

today's text and concluded that the four freedoms of Roosevelt are also contained in the text of Micah. Freedom of Ignorance-he will teach us His ways; Freedom from war-neither shall they learn war anymore; Freedom from want-everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree. This is a proverbial expression that means prosperity and peace; and lastly Freedom from fear-no one should be afraid.

Application

Brothers and sisters we are gathering today to “remember them.” Who were these people? These were people who sacrificed their “today” for the sake of our “tomorrow”. These were the people who endured storms of the Pacific/Atlantic Oceans in the Second World War; these were the people who endured rain, floods and snow in the trenches of the western front during the First World War. They sacrificed their homes for us to have decent homes. They sacrificed their freedom for our freedom. Brothers and sisters, as we remember these people, guard jealously the greatest gift of peace that was handed down to us by these selfless men and women. What we need is not just peace but sustainable peace and this can only be achieved when conflict hot spots around the world are completely eradicated in countries such as; Afghanistan, Ethiopia, The Sahel region of North Africa, the Yemen, Venezuela, Somalia, Libya, Iran, Russia, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Let us be ambassadors of peace and support our world leaders as they strive for peace, justice and strong institutions by 2030. Amen.

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