

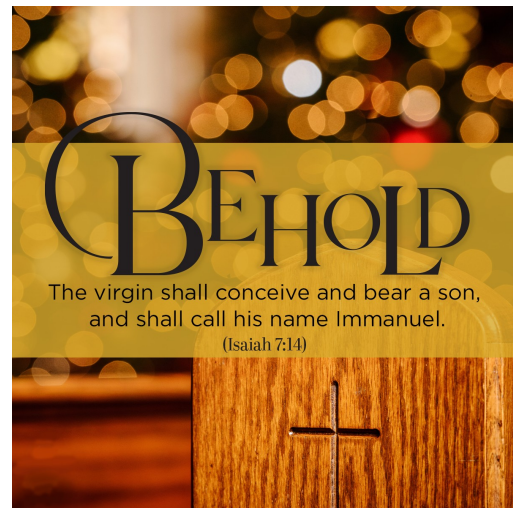
The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Micah 5:2-5a

December 19, 2021

“And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.”

Mic 5:4–5



David's Son, David's Lord

Dear brothers and sisters: grace to you and peace from God our Father and from the

Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Had we lived 700 years before the birth of Christ rather than 2,000 years after, and if we had heard the preaching of the prophet Micah during that time, we would already have known much about the coming of the Messiah. We would have known where He was to be born. We would have known his family lineage. And even more importantly than these prophecies concerning His biographical information, we would already have known the reason for His coming. Micah tells all of this in our Old Testament reading this morning as we end our Advent series on these Old Testament prophets, and Micah is crystal clear: “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”¹ Hearing these words in ancient times, perhaps one would have the same question that is on the lips of many people today: so what? Why should I care if

¹ Mic 5:2.

another ruler comes out of the line of David, from the city of Bethlehem, like many others? What's the big deal? Well, Micah doesn't leave us with a mere history lesson. The reason for His coming is this: "And he shall be their peace."² You see, the Son of David, born to Mary and Joseph in the little town of Bethlehem, is also David's Lord, and the Lord of all. He comes to bring peace on earth, the only peace that matters for eternity: peace between God and man, a peace that He will purchase with His very blood.

Bethlehem was situated about five miles or 8 kilometres southwest of Jerusalem. Compared to the glory of Jerusalem, Bethlehem sure wasn't much to look at. It was indeed a "little town." Those words of course begin the well known "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and since we are still in Advent we will keep our Christmas hymns on the shelf for another week. But if you are here Friday for the candlelight service you will have the opportunity to sing out the words of that well-known carol. Yet in spite of its humble appearance Bethlehem was a place of great significance in the eyes of God. For here was born David, the anointed king who stands in the line of his greatest descendant, the Christ, the Messiah – Jesus. So Bethlehem is indeed small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, but as St. Matthew records in his Gospel, in a paraphrase of our text in Micah, "you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah."³

It's part of our Advent story, the mystery of how something so incredible could come

² Mic 5:5.

³ Mt 2:6.

out of such humble means. But we are prepared to hear this if we pay attention to what our Lord means to show us in the story of David. For he also comes out of this nondescript village, Bethlehem, working in obscurity as a shepherd, a keeper of flocks in the field, overlooked in favour of brothers who seemed to have more on the ball than he did. But God picked him, and Samuel anointed him, “And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.”⁴ God picked the small, the insignificant, to accomplish what He intends. This is how He works. Look at Mary and Joseph, two nobodies from nowhere. And guess what? He even uses tiny parishes in small towns to get His Gospel work done. He uses ordinary, insignificant means, things like water, bread, and wine, which by themselves seem to be nothing, but when combined with His Word, they become the power of God, the way to receive His very grace and mercy, the very forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

So Bethlehem becomes the city of David. And David becomes the anointed king of a united Israel, and God worked through David to bring about peace. At least for a time, for it would not last. And of course David had his faults, grievous sins against God that hurt his rule, and hurt people around him. Micah however speaks to us of another Ruler who will come out of the city of David. He will be a Ruler unlike any other, for the Rule He brings is of the Kingdom of Heaven. This Ruler, the Messiah, is not only one who will rule over Israel, but He will rule over all nations, north and south, east and west. And another thing about this Ruler: not only does He descend from the line of David, but the prophet Micah says His “coming forth is from of old,

⁴ 1 Sa 16:13.

from ancient days.”⁵ Indeed, for Christ comes as the Incarnate Deity, begotten of the Father before all things were made. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.”⁶ The Psalm of Moses says, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”⁷ In the little town of Bethlehem heaven crashes in on the here and now because God is now with us. The gap between heaven and earth is no more. Now God comes, born into the most humble of circumstances, and He comes for you. Jesus is born the Son of God, who took it upon Himself to be like us, to be made man. Jesus takes human nature in the womb of the Blessed Mary, so that there may be two natures joined in one person, truly God and truly man. In the little town of Bethlehem unto us “a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”⁸

So the King of King and Lord of Lord’s comes and Micah says He takes a stand, and He shall “shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.”⁹ He takes a stand on behalf of those who are counted among His sheep, those who hear His voice and listen, those who are renewed in the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism and raised again to new life. He takes a stand as the

5 Mic 5:2.

6 Jn 1:1–2.

7 Ps 90:2.

8 Is 9:6.

9 Mic 5:4.

Good Shepherd against sin and death and all that would harm us. He makes this happen not with armies and earthly power, but with His own shed blood. This is very disappointing to many people, then and now. Many do not understand this. Even His disciples will have this sense that there must be something more, something in the here and now that demonstrates that God will not be pushed around. After His resurrection they will encounter Jesus and not recognize Him, and they will say, “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”¹⁰ Well, that’s exactly what He has done. He stands and shepherds, a greater and mightier work than any earthly king has ever accomplished, even David. For the work of David’s greater Son is the work of saving, it is the work of redemption. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is our shepherd king who stands in our place, who goes to the cross, who dies for us so that we would be rescued from death and damnation.

God’s people now dwell securely in the Rule and Reign of God made know by the birth of the Son. “And he shall be their peace.”¹² We all want peace. We need to know where to look for it. It won’t come if we fix our politics. It won’t come if we fix our culture. It won’t come if we think we can shape God to meet our expectations. Peace will not come from within if we dig down deep enough to get in touch with our “inner potential.” No, the peace which the prophet Micah speaks of comes out of the city of David, which is now the city of the Messiah. The peace

¹⁰ Lk 24:21.

¹¹ Jn 10:11.

¹² Mic 5:5.

comes from Bethlehem, and the peace comes from a place outside of Jerusalem, where unspeakable violence will be laid upon the Saviour. He will endure what we deserve in order that we might have what He has: righteousness and holiness. As St. Paul writes, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”¹³ We walk through the valleys of our life knowing that God is for us, knowing that Christ has gone before us in this life in order to secure our eternal life with Him. That doesn’t mean that we won’t have valleys. That doesn’t mean that we won’t have trials in this life. But we dwell secure, in Him, and we have peace, because of what happened in the little town of Bethlehem.

Jesus comes as David’s greater Son, and He comes as David’s Lord. He comes as our Lord as well, the Ruler of all who will restore what was lost in the Garden at that first transgression. He comes to give what the prophets and the people of the Old Testament church were looking toward, now ours to be received in faith by the work of the Holy Spirit. Peace. The justification of the sinner, by grace. “We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell.” Well, during this Advent season the glad tidings we have heard came to us by those prophets of the Old Testament, who clearly proclaim the grace and mercy of God in the coming of the Messiah. First we heard Jeremiah announcing that the Promise would spring forth, “a righteous Branch to spring up for David” who “shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”¹⁴

The prophet Malachi showed us that the Promise of God returns to His people, even

¹³ Ro 8:31–32.

¹⁴ Je 33:15.

though they would walk away from him. We heard of the two messengers of God, John the Baptist, and then the Messenger who is Christ, who is also the Message, the Gospel Good News in the flesh. Zephaniah told us to exult and rejoice because the Promised King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst. We have the joy of the Lord because He rejoices over us, so much that He came to save us from our sins. And now Micah points us to the little town of Bethlehem, where the Promise is born, the One who was foretold in the line of David, now come as the Ruler of a heavenly kingdom. Jesus is the Promise we have heard of all along this Advent season, He is the promise of the Old Testament, and He will make you dwell secure. He will be your peace. These prophets have spoken the Good News of our coming King: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he.”¹⁵ Amen.

And now the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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✠ Soli Deo Gloria

¹⁵ Zec 9:9.