

Advent: Peace – Micah 5:2-5a (NIV)
Cornerstone Community Church

On this second Sunday of advent, we are focused on *peace*. We love the whole Christmas season, but in addition to all the stress we face in normal life in our crazy age, the holidays can bring their own kind of stress.

Our passage from the ancient prophet Micah, chapter 5, tells us about a glorious ruler who brings peace.

First, Micah 5:2 tells us that from a lowly and humbled Israel a **ruler** will come.

Micah 5:2

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

a. **But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah...out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel:** In the coming time of humiliation under foreign powers, God would raise up a great **ruler** from a humble place – **Bethlehem**.

i. **Bethlehem** was well known as the hometown of David, Israel’s greatest king, yet it was never a great or influential city. It was truly **small among the clans of Judah**. Yet God chose it as the birthplace of the Messiah, the **ruler over Israel**.

ii. The Jewish people knew this spoke of where the Messiah would come from. This passage from Micah 5 was quoted by the chief priests and teachers of the law when Herod asked about the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 2:5-6).

b. **Whose origins are from of old, from ancient times:** This glorious promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and Micah’s prophetic voice declared that though Jesus came from Bethlehem, He did not *begin* there. His **origins** are from before the foundation of the world, from *everlasting* (as in the NKJV).

i. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13). This means from the very beginning, Jesus was there. There was never a time when Jesus did not exist.

ii. Before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He existed as the *Second Person of the Trinity* (John 17:5, 17:24). These passages tell us that there was a relationship of love, fellowship, and shared glory that the Father and the Son shared before the creation of all things. The name “Jesus” was not known as a name for the Second Person of the Trinity until the angel Gabriel announced it to Mary (Luke 1:31). But the eternal Son existed before He revealed Himself as “Jesus.”

iii. Before Bethlehem, Jesus was the creator of all things (Colossians 1:16-17, John 1:1-3).

iv. In the Old Testament, Jesus appeared as God made visible or the Angel of the LORD. There are many instances in the Old Testament where individuals are shown to have had a face-to-face encounter with the LORD (Genesis 16:7-13, Genesis 18, Genesis 32:24-32, Joshua 5:13-15, Judges 6:11-24, Judges 13:8-24, Daniel 3). This was Jesus, appearing in some human form, before He was ever born in Bethlehem.

iv. Knowing that Jesus’ **origins are from old, from ancient times** shows us some important things:

- It shows us the *glory* of Jesus, that He is far more than a man.
- It shows us the *love* of Jesus, that He would leave the glory of heaven for us.
- It shows us the *nature* of Jesus, that He would add humanity to His deity.
- It shows us the *sympathy* of Jesus, that He remains fully man and fully God (1 Timothy 2:5).

2. (3-5a) The ruler serves His flock.

Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor bears a son,
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
And he will be our peace

- a. [3] **Israel will be abandoned until the time**: Micah anticipated a future time, when the LORD would seem distant from Israel **until the time** for restoration is ready.

b. [4] **He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD:** After the time of Israel's trial, the LORD will restore gloriously. The *ruler* born in Bethlehem (5:2) will tenderly care for **his flock in the strength of the LORD.**

c. [4] **They will live securely:** The greatness of the *ruler* from Bethlehem guarantees the standing of His people. They **live securely** because of His greatness.

d. [5] **He will be our peace:** It isn't just that the *ruler* from Bethlehem *brings peace*; He *is peace*. This is the Christmas story – the peace Jesus brings.

When Jesus was born, an army of angels – the Bible says it was a *host of angels*, but we would call it an *army of angels* – they sang or shouted,

Luke 2:14

**Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**

It was the perfect way to introduce to the world Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Man of Peace. Think of how it was true that Jesus was a Man of Peace:

- He lived a life of peace – Jesus never hurt anyone, and the only destructive miracle He ever did was to curse a fig tree.
- Even when Jesus boldly confronted corruption, He did it without violence.
- Jesus taught others to do as He did, to be people of peace, teaching us to love our enemies and to pray for those who attack us.
- At times Jesus had thousands of followers who wanted to make Him king, but He refused any kind of violent revolution.
- Jesus said, *blessed are the peacemakers* and He lived it out.

Jesus didn't just come to bring peace to society, but to individual lives. We need that today, especially in an age of uncertainty, of war, of violence, and of terrorism. The good news of it all is that Jesus can bring peace to your life.

- It's peace that money or status can't buy.
- It's peace that doesn't depend on what others think about you.
- It's peace that even good health can't bring.
- It's peace that is the gift of Jesus.

That would be the best Christmas gift of all – the gift of peace from Jesus. The truth is that Christmas season is often when we feel less peace and more stress. Many people, if they had to describe Christmas in one word it would not be **peace**, it would be **stress**.

- Stressed by travel.
- Stressed by holiday events.

- Stressed by gift buying.
- Stressed by family.

That's what Christmas is like for many. Some of you are stressed out right now.

I think there was a lot of Christmas stress at Bethlehem. We often clean up the story of the Bible and forget just how real and earthy the story is. Think of Mary and Joseph's "Christmas vacation" and all its problems.

- **Travel problems** – about 80 miles on foot, probably a four-day journey.
- **Family problems** – Joseph didn't live in Bethlehem for a reason.
- **Hotel problems** – their Air B&B thing in Bethlehem completely fell through.
- **Medical problems** – having a baby isn't like a sprained ankle.
- **Guest problems** – shady visitors (shepherds) showed up uninvited.
- **Gift problems** – gold, frankincense, and myrrh are nice but not practical
- **Tax problems** – don't forget why they came to Bethlehem to begin with

Add it all up and it seems more like Chevy Chase in *Christmas Vacation* than Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

With all of that, the angels still sang:

Luke 2:14

**Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**

When they sang that, they meant more than we might know. The shepherds they sang to were *Jewish* shepherds, from a Jewish culture. When they heard *peace*, they thought of the Jewish idea of *shalom*.

- In Hebrew, *shalom* means hello and goodbye – it's how you greet others
- It also means peace, but more than just the stopping of conflict – *shalom* is contentment, completeness, wholeness, well-being and harmony.
- Jesus didn't come to just stop the fighting, but to bring *shalom*.

The night before He went to the cross, Jesus said:

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

Jesus gave His people the gift of peace as He went to the cross. He was saying "goodbye" to the disciples – saying *shalom*, but He didn't say it the way the world says goodbye. It wasn't casual or empty.

When we say *goodbye*, we are really pronouncing a Christian blessing: *God be with ye*. No one thinks of it that way, but we can.

In the same way Jesus didn't say *shalom* to His disciples in some casual way that everyone said it. *Jesus had real peace to give them*

We talk about peace all the time:

- Peace and quiet.
- Peace of mind.
- Moment of peace.
- World peace.
- Peacetime.
- Peace in our time.
- Peaceful.

People talk about peace, but Jesus can and does *give peace*.

Where does this peace come from? Go back to *where* the angels sang. It was in Bethlehem that they shouted,

Luke 2:14

**Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**

You can come to Bethlehem. We sing it that great Christmas song, *Come All Ye Faithful*:

O Come All Ye Faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him
Born the King of Angels
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

All that is true – God invites you to Bethlehem, to adore Jesus and to receive His peace. All of you who are faithful, you're invited. Everyone who is joyful – come right in. The triumphant are welcome.

Here's the problem: *not all of us are faithful, joyful, and triumphant*. If you are, that's great – Bethlehem and the peace of Jesus are for you. You can't be so faithful, joyful, or triumphant that you don't need the peace of Jesus anymore.

Jesus gives His peace to more than the faithful, joyful, and triumphant.

- If you say, “I’m not faithful – I’ve been unfaithful” – you’re also welcome to Bethlehem.
- If you say, “I’m not joyful – I’m sorrowful” – you’re also welcome to Bethlehem.
- If you say, “I’m not triumphant – I’m defeated” – you are also welcome to Bethlehem.

We all need the Shalom of Jesus, what He won for us on the cross. It’s a different kind of peace than anyone can find elsewhere in this world. Remember the words Jesus said right before He went to the cross:

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.

As He went to the cross, Jesus had no inheritance or fortune to leave to His followers in a last will and testament. Yet Jesus gave them two things greater than any fortune: the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and the **peace** of Jesus Himself. This is the peace of God the Son, with His complete trusting love in God the Father.

It was the peace of an untroubled heart, trusting in God completely – even as He went to the cross! *This* is the peace God has for you in Jesus Christ.