

Fourth Sunday in Advent
 Dec. 23, 2012
 Micah 5:2-5a

In Christ Jesus, our newborn King, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

As I was studying for this morning's sermon I discovered that the last verses of Micah are read every year by Jewish worshippers in the afternoon service on Yom Kippur---the Day of Atonement. These verses are: **WHO IS A GOD LIKE YOU, PARDONING INIQUITY AND PASSING OVER THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE REMNANT OF HIS HERITAGE? HE DOES NOT RETAIN HIS ANGER FOREVER, BECAUSE HE DELIGHTS IN MERCY. HE WILL AGAIN HAVE COMPASSION ON US, AND WILL SUBDUCE OUR INIQUITIES. YOU WILL CAST ALL OUR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA. YOU WILL GIVE TRUTH TO JACOB AND MERCY TO ABRAHAM, WHICH YOU HAVE SWORN TO OUR FATHERS FROM DAYS OF OLD.**

What wonderful Good News! But how can these Jewish worshippers not see in this Good News that it is the loving God, the Father who sent His Son Jesus whom Micah is speaking about? How could God **PARDON INIQUITY AND PASS OVER THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE REMNANT OF HIS HERITAGE and CAST ALL OUR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA?**

He tells us! **GOD WAS IN CHRIST RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES TO THEM,... FOR HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. And HE (JESUS) HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY BUT ALSO FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.**

Forgiveness, pardon and peace can only come through Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem. How can the Jewish worshippers miss that when a few chapters earlier in Micah, our text clearly speaks of the birthplace of the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Savior!

Our theme from Micah is:

COME SEE OUR NEWBORN KING!

I: A Human---Born to a Human Mother in Bethlehem

II: A Ruler----From Eternity!

BUT YOU, BETHLEHEM EPHRATHAH, THOUGH YOU ARE LITTLE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF JUDAH, YET OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH TO ME THE ONE TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL, WHOSE GOINGS FORTH ARE FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING. THEREFORE HE SHALL GIVE THEM UP, UNTIL THE TIME THAT SHE WHO IS IN LABOR HAS GIVEN BIRTH; THEN THE REMNANT OF HIS BRETHREN SHALL RETURN TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

To the Jew of Micah's day these words were shocking. Ever since King David, the next newborn king was born in Jerusalem, the large, capital city of Judah. Oh, Bethlehem had its 15 minutes of fame, its moment in the limelight years earlier when King David became ruler. That was his birthplace.

But the King lived in Jerusalem. Bethlehem was an insignificant little village some 6 miles away. It was so small that it wasn't even listed in the 100 cities of the clans of Judah in Joshua 15.

Here is another example of God using what seems puny, powerless and insignificant to display His gracious power. What did Paul write in Corinthians: **HE CHOSE THE LOWLY THINGS OF THIS WORLD AND THE DESPISED THINGS-- AND THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT-- TO NULLIFY THE THINGS THAT ARE, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST BEFORE HIM.** Who would think the Messiah King would be born there, in small, lowly Bethlehem!

Micah is also clear about this King's human roots. He prophesies that Israel will be abandoned to foreign rule and will not regain any prominence until **SHE WHO IS IN LABOR HAS GIVEN BIRTH** to this Ruler. Of course Micah is speaking of the virgin birth of Jesus while under Roman rule.

His kingdom will include **THE REMNANT OF HIS BRETHREN.** Who are they? Micah already told his readers in 4:2: **MANY NATIONS SHALL COME AND SAY, "COME, AND LET US GO UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD, TO THE HOUSE OF THE GOD OF JACOB; HE WILL TEACH US HIS WAYS, AND WE SHALL WALK IN HIS PATHS." FOR OUT OF ZION THE LAW SHALL GO FORTH, AND THE WORD OF THE LORD FROM JERUSALEM.**

His kingdom will include all of the spiritual children of Abraham. Hosea prophesied: **YET THE NUMBER OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, WHICH CANNOT BE MEASURED OR NUMBERED. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE IT SHALL BE SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.'... THEN I WILL SAY TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'YOU ARE MY PEOPLE!' AND THEY SHALL SAY, 'YOU ARE MY GOD!' "**

What a blessing for us Gentile believers. We are accepted by this Messiah King as His brothers. Jesus said to His disciples: **AND OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD; THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY WILL HEAR MY VOICE; AND THERE WILL BE ONE FLOCK AND ONE SHEPHERD.** Jesus was speaking of us!

Paul tells us: **NOW, THEREFORE, YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD, HAVING BEEN BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.** We are the remnant of His brethren!

But a second reason these words were shocking to the Jews of Micah's day was this prophecy was not about ANY king being born, but a King whose goings forth, whose origins are from eternity! How could this be?

Isaiah, a contemporary prophet of Micah, explains it. We read in Is 7:14: **THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU A SIGN: BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE AND BEAR A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.**

Yes, the Messiah King could trace His lineage, His human ancestry back to King David, to Abraham and eventually to Adam, but He also already existed before Adam was created because He is Immanuel: God with us. God in human flesh and blood!

This King existed before time began, in eternity! That is why Jesus could claim: **I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS BORN, I AM!**

In our first reading from Hebrews we hear Jesus say: **A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME.**

The hymn writer says this about this Messiah King who is God from eternity and also Man born in time: **Of the Father's love begotten Ere the worlds began to be, He is Alpha and Omega, He the Source, the Ending He, Of the things that are, that have been, And that future years shall see Evermore and evermore.**

We read again verse 4: **AND HE SHALL STAND AND FEED HIS FLOCK IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD, IN THE MAJESTY OF THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD; AND THEY SHALL ABIDE, FOR NOW HE SHALL BE GREAT TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH; AND THIS ONE SHALL BE PEACE.**

COME SEE OUR NEWBORN KING!

III: A Shepherd---Courageous and Strong

This new born King will also be a Shepherd, but not just any shepherd. He is the Shepherd who will stand in the strength of the LORD. There is no normal strength He brings to His work; it is the infinite power of the almighty God. He is the Shepherd who satisfies His sheep with everything they need and who feeds His sheep on the green pastures and quiet waters of His faith strengthening Word.

Who can this be speaking of but Jesus, who declared that He is the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep by name; who lays down His life for His sheep and takes it up again. He has the courage and strength to have conquered and destroyed all of our enemies — sin, death, Satan and hell. He is the Good Shepherd who gives His sheep eternal life and guarantees us that we shall never perish since no one can snatch us out of His hand.

And finally Micah tells us that this newborn King is:

IV: A Conqueror---Whose Reign is Eternal!

Micah ends this section of his prophecy by saying that this newborn King's people will remain and dwell safely and securely in peace throughout all time into eternity for His greatness extends to the ends of the earth. The Messiah-King's victory is complete. No enemies are left to stand against Him. Paul declares in I Cor. 15: **O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?**

**THE STING OF DEATH /S SIN, AND THE STRENGTH OF SIN /S THE LAW. BUT THANKS
BE TO GOD, WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

This amazing prophecy deals with a number of core doctrines: the Savior's divinity and humanity; His humiliation and exaltation; the reliability of Scripture—God's prophecies are fulfilled; the universal nature of God's grace and the Savior's absolute victory over sin, death, Satan and hell.

On Wednesday night we mentioned that "Advent is the season for repentance for there is no other way to prepare for Christ's coming. Without a knowledge of our sins we miss the whole purpose of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection. If the Savior in the manger is going to mean anything to me, I need to know how much I need Him. With a repentant heart of godly sorrow over our sins and a trust in Jesus for forgiveness we receive Him properly."

This sermon text helps make the transition from the repentance of Advent to the joy of the Savior's birth. The Savior's birth which we shall be celebrating tomorrow evening and again on Tuesday morning. Then we will **COME TO SEE OUR NEWBORN KING!**

I: A Human---Born to a Human Mother in Bethlehem

II: A Ruler----From Eternity!

III: A Shepherd---Courageous and Strong

IV: A Conqueror---Whose reign is Eternal!

Amen.