



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 25, 2012
Christmas Festival Worship
Sermon Text: [Micah 5:1-7](#)
Mr. Richard Muchka

First Lesson: [Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-7](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 98](#)
Second Lesson: [Hebrews 1:1-9](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 1:1-18](#)

A Promised Ruler From Bethlehem

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

It is a rather remarkable fact that at every one of the great festivals of the church year, at Christmas, during Lent and Easter, and at Pentecost time, we are reminded of prophecies that were spoken hundreds and even thousands of years before the events which we see celebrated on those festivals. Indeed it is almost impossible to touch the Christmas story at any point without being reminded in some way of the Old Testament prophecy, the promises God made in ancient times and which were being fulfilled in the birth of Christ. In our children's service last evening, for example, our boys and girls reminded us of many of the prophecies of the Old Testament which were fulfilled in the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem.

The text which we have before us this morning is one of these Old Testament messianic prophecies, one of these Old Testament promises concerning the Messiah. The words of this text were written by the prophet Micah. He preached to the children of Israel during the years when Isaiah, one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets, was also speaking and writing his prophecies. If you will compare the first verses of the Book of Isaiah with the first verses of the Book of Micah, you will see immediately that these two men lived and worked under the same king and in the same country. It is entirely possible that they were personally acquainted with each other for they lived only about 20 miles apart. It is almost certain that they were at least familiar with one another's work. In fact, their prophecies are so much alike that Micah is often called the little Isaiah. And there are verses in the Book of Micah which are almost verbatim, identical with the verses in the Book of Isaiah.

It's very likely that Micah also knew about the prophecy of Isaiah in which he had spoken of the virgin birth of our Lord. "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son." In our text, Micah also speaks of a woman who would prevail who would suffer the pains of childbirth and would bring forth a son. Isaiah had called this child Immanuel, which means God with us. Micah describes him as the ruler in Israel. On the basis of this prophecy and under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, we shall this morning consider the newborn Christ child as the promised ruler of Israel.

In the first verse of our text, it's familiar to all of us in that Micah tells us that the ruler of Israel will come out of Bethlehem. We have all heard this prophecy about Bethlehem

so often that we may not understand how wonderful it actually is that Micah should have said this. Remember, he lived 700 years before the Savior was born. Bethlehem was a little bit of a town. "It was little among the thousands of Judah," says Micah. It didn't really amount to very much.

When Micah made this prophecy about a ruler coming out of Bethlehem, it was as if a man in our country today would prophecy that in 700 years or so a president of the United States would be born in De Pere, Wisconsin. That would certainly be a prediction that no one would care to bet much money on. In fact, we have no way of knowing whether anyone will even be born in De Pere 700 years from now. We can't even be sure that there will be a United States 700 years from now or even that we will still have a president. Yet, Micah looked at the little town of Bethlehem on his day and was able to say, "Some day the ruler in Israel is going to come out of you." It was no guess when he said it for it came true. The only way in which he could know it was through the revelation of God.

The prophet also tells us that this ruler, that his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. In other words, he has been from all eternity. Even though he would come from Bethlehem, he would still be eternal God, just as Isaiah indicated in his prophecy when he said that his name would be called the everlasting Father. That the everlasting God who made the world should come from the little town of Bethlehem is an even greater prophecy than the previous one. As we read the New Testament and believe it, there just can't be any doubt that this humble virgin son from Bethlehem whose birth we celebrate today is indeed the everlasting God. For John says of him that "He was in the beginning with God" ([John 1:2](#)), and he himself told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" ([John 8:58](#)).

Micah also knew that even though he would be the true God, he would also be a man. He tells us that this ruler will be brought forth by a woman, and he calls the children of Israel his brothers in our text. That God should become man sounds impossible to human reason. But that a man like Micah living in a little country like Palestine 700 years before the time Christ should foretell that such a thing as this would happen surely is beyond all possibility as far as men are concerned. Such prophecies as this can only come from God.

In his birth in Bethlehem, we have a concrete demonstration of the fact that he is truly our ruler. It was Caesar Augustus that issued a decree that ordered the taxing of the whole world ([Luke 2:1](#)). It was this order of the Roman emperor that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where this old prophecy was fulfilled. That is most assuredly more than just a lucky coincidence. God was using the mightiest ruler of the time to make his prophecy come true.

The prophecy of Micah is not only something to wonder at, it's also a source of great comfort for us today, almost 3,000 years after it was written. Micah says in our text, "He will be great until the ends of the earth." This was not a new prophecy. More than 200 years before Micah, Solomon had written in [Psalm 72](#), "You shall have dominion

also from sea to sea and from River to the ends of the earth.” He would come from Bethlehem. He would be the ruler in Israel. But his influence and his power and his blessings would stretch far beyond the borders of Palestine. For the Lord had already told Abraham when he said that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him ([Genesis 18:18](#)).

As you and I sit here and sing the glories of the Christ child who was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, about 8,000 miles away from here, we are also a living fulfillment of this prophecy, that he will be great until the ends of the earth. The prophet pictures this ruler in Israel as one who would bring great blessing to his people. He says, “He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they will abide.” His people will abide. They shall have a dwelling place because he is there in his strength to protect them, to feed them, to give them all that they need for body and soul.

As we think of all the blessings that have come to us through our Savior, through this child of Bethlehem, as we think of the hope and the joy and the comfort and the forgiveness and the salvation that we have in him, we know that these words of the prophet are just as true as all the rest. These blessings come to us without any merit on our part. Just as the dew falls on the grass and the showers fall upon the dry ground as free gifts of God, that does not wait for anything that man does, so these blessings come also as a free gift to us. They are not held back until we are good enough to deserve them. How often do we hear it said that Christmas presents will be given only to those who are good. But this present, this gift of God, is given to all of us, even in our unworthiness. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

In that assurance, we find our peace, the real peace of Christmas. Micah said, “This man will be peace.” He brought us peace with God by taking away the sins that made us the enemies of God and made God angry with them. So often the Scriptures name peace as one of the great blessings of the Savior. Isaiah for example called him the Prince of Peace ([Isaiah 9:6](#)). The angels at the time of his birth saying “Peace on Earth” ([Luke 2:13-14](#)). Still later, the apostle Paul wrote of him, “He is our peace” ([Ephesians 2:14](#)). Once you know what it means to have your sins taken away by Christ, to have the sure conviction that God loves us in him, you also know what it is meant by this peace that comes to our hearts and our souls through this Christ child of Bethlehem.

We have not been promised that this peace will never be disturbed in this world. As long as we live here, there will still be enemies who try to rob us of this peace, who try to destroy also the peace of mind that we have in Christ. But through the year, day after day, we can go back to those promises of forgiveness which are always true in him. Outward peace in this life we might not have.

At the time of Micah, the children of Israel were disturbed and troubled by the attacks of the Assyrians. They lived in the days when Sennacherib was making his invasions of

Palestine. But even though Assyria was strong and Judah was weak, Micah wrote, "When the Assyrians come into our land and when they cut into our palaces, he shall deliver us from the Assyrian. When he comes to our land, even in our borders."

Assyria was a great threat to God's people once, but they have disappeared. Other enemies of God's people have risen to take their place, but we can take this text and put it in the names of all of our enemies, spiritual or temporal, devils or atheistic communists, and we can be sure that the ruler in Israel who came out of Bethlehem and who rules until the ends of the earth will also deliver us and that he will be our peace forever and ever. God grant that to us all. Amen.