



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 18, 2013

Midweek Advent Worship

Sermon Text: [Micah 5:4-5](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 85](#)

Scripture Lesson: [Ephesians 2:11-18](#)

### Zion at Your Shining Gates is Your Peace

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Imagine what it would be like to turn on CNN and see reports of an enemy army approaching our borders. An enemy that is stronger than us. An enemy that is known for its violence, cruelty, and utter disregard for human life. How would you feel if you saw these live reports day after day after day? How would you feel if you laid your head on the pillow every night and knew this enemy was getting closer and closer and closer? Without a doubt, your anxiety level would increase as feelings of safety and security flew out the window. Your new daily companions would be fear, worry, and uncertainty.

If you can begin to imagine that kind of daily fear, you are beginning to understand the message that Micah was sharing with the people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Micah was a prophet in Judah from 739 to 695 BC. He spoke God's word to God's people during the time that Assyria came from the north and defeated the Northern Kingdom of Israel. That happened in 722. In 701, Sennacherib and his army would lay siege to Jerusalem itself. It appeared as though Judah would fall as well. God delivered Judah, but not without Sennacherib "*striking Hezekiah on the cheek.*" Hezekiah was forced to pay tribute to Assyria. He was humbled before this mighty earthly power. Sometime before this took place, Micah spoke the words I just read to you.

As the people of Judah lived in daily fear of an enemy that destroyed the Northern Kingdom, God painted a picture of the coming Messiah that they could easily relate to. The Messiah would come from an unexpected place, Bethlehem. The Messiah would come when Israel was abandoned by God. This was telling the people that eventually an enemy would come from which God would not deliver them. This happened in 586 when the Babylonians came. The people would return but there would be no descendent of David on the throne until the Messiah came from Bethlehem. As the people lived in fear of the Assyrians, think of how meaningful this picture of the Messiah would be to them:

*<sup>4</sup> He will stand and shepherd his flock  
in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.*

God always looks at a bigger picture than we do. He was using the threat of the Assyrians to paint a broader picture of his master plan. The threat of defeat by the Assyrians was real. But God was not so much concerned about that as he was about getting the people to see the bigger picture about the role of the Messiah. He will shepherd his people in God's strength. He would see to it that they would live securely. But just as the Messiah would come from an unexpected place, so also his work would be unexpected to many. The security the Messiah would bring was bigger than the nation of Israel, it would "*reach to the ends of the earth.*" His greatness would be the peace that reaches to the ends of the earth! That is not just about Assyria. That is about the Messiah coming and removing the dividing wall of hostility that separated the world from God. The picture of peace and safety would strike home with God's people especially as they felt this threat from Assyria. But God had his prophet point them to something bigger and better. He pointed them to peace between the world and God!

A frequent discussion point at our *Today's Light Bible* Class centers around whether or not the Israelites understood these prophecies the way that we do. Those blessed with the Spirit living in their hearts by faith probably did. Those who had faith obscured by the events and the threats of the day probably did not. Those without faith probably just thought Micah was nuts. That really is no different than the world today. The Messiah came and removed our sins so now we are at peace with God. Through Jesus' life and death we know for a certainty that God loves us and is our refuge and strength. When the Spirit's flame of faith in our hearts is burning brightly, we know this without doubt. But at times we live with fear, worry, and uncertainty as our daily companions. When that is a part of our daily life, we all too often move our focus from the peace God has won for us in Christ to the things that trouble us. We act and live as though God is not our refuge and strength. We are more like the Israelites who shifted their focus from the promise of a Savior who would bring peace between God and man to a Messiah who would get rid of the Assyrians, or Babylonians, or Romans. We take for granted a God who gave us the peace of forgiveness, and we want him to be a God who gives us the peace of health, or financial stability, or restored relationships. Holding God to a promise he has not made is the attempt of sinners to reshape God in our image. True peace comes when we focus on God as he is, not how we want him to be.

Just as God looked at a bigger picture for Judah, so he also looks at a bigger picture in your life. He sees your life not limited to the time you spend on this earth. He is already looking past that and into eternity. That is why Simeon could say that he would now depart in peace to the next world, because he had seen his Savior. God's peace assures you that the troubles you endure here are truly light and momentary no matter how heavy they seem now. Eternity is much longer and much greater than what we endure now.

This does not mean that God is not here to give you peace now. He is here with his love, his forgiveness, and his promises to be your peace and security now. He just provides it as he sees fit, not as you might desire. His love surrounds you. His promise tells you that no trouble can separate you from his love. The peace of sins forgiven is God's seal of guarantee that all of his promises will be kept. This guarantee is not

some extended warranty protection plan that you bought at a Best Buy or WalMart checkout. This guarantee was bought for you personally by the God who created the universe. It cost him leaving heaven, becoming fully human, and being slaughtered as the sacrifice that takes away the guilt of sin. It was not an added on fee, it was God's plan for you from all eternity! A God who loves you so incredibly much is the definition of peace that passes all understanding! Amen.