

The Coming King

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Shine Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because you're filling a seat, but because we are following after Jesus together as one community, and as we follow Jesus together, we're convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which means that God has something to say to everyone in his word. He has something to say to people who've been Christians their entire lives, and he also has something to say to people who might have doubts and questions and objections to Christianity, and so it's with that that we turn to God's word as we do every week. We are in the season of Advent, and as I've been telling you, Advent is an English word that comes from a Latin word, which means to arrive or to come, and Advent's the time of year when we celebrate that Jesus came to earth. We celebrate his first coming, and then we also look forward to his second coming.

Of course, that's what we always do as Christians, but it's something that we focus on in a special way at Christmas, and we focus on the fact that Jesus became a man and was born in a manger in a stable.

As we're going through Advent, we're in the book of Micah. Remember that Micah is a book filled with prophecies by a man named Micah, who is a prophet in the 8th century BC, and he prophesied to Judah, which was the kingdom of Israel that was in the south. He was coming after the time of the great king, so this is after David and Solomon, but it's also before the exile. It's before God's people went in exile to Babylon. It's that in-between phase, and we've seen that Micah is a book about both judgment and salvation. We looked at judgment with chapter one, and then last week we were in salvation with chapter four, looking at the coming kingdom that Jesus is going to bring about.

Now, some of you have asked me, and even folks outside of our church have asked me, why in the world are we looking at Micah for Advent? Maybe you've been wondering that question. The answer is going to come out a little bit today. The reason that we're looking at Micah for Advent is that Micah is the only Old Testament book where it's predicted that Jesus is going to be born in Bethlehem.

This is the book of the Bethlehem prophecy, and that's what we're going to look at today. We have been working our way up to this point. This is part of the reason we've been singing all these songs about Bethlehem this morning, and we're going to ask just a simple question. Why does it matter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem? You might ask it a different way. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

[2 : 4 1] Who cares? Why do we make such a big deal out of it? Why do we have songs about it? What is it? Why is there such a huge emphasis at Christmas on the birthplace of Jesus? You notice, by the way, when I introduced myself to you, I didn't say, I'm Matthew Capone, and I was born in Waco, Texas. My birthplace is insignificant, but the Bible seems to make a big deal out of Jesus' birthplace. It's with that we're going to turn. We're in Micah chapter 5, starting at verse 1.

As we come to this, remember that this is God's word. God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. It is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. That's why we're going to read together now, starting at verse 1.

Verse 3.

Verse 5.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you speak to us, and even more than that, we thank you that you sent your Son to be not just a king and a ruler, but also to be a shepherd.

[4 : 41] We ask that you would shepherd us this morning by your word, that you would help us to understand more and more what it is about Jesus Christ that is glorious and wonderful, that should bring us both fear and joy.

And we ask that you would do that by your spirit now. We ask these things boldly, not because we have earned them, but because Jesus has earned them for us.

And so we ask them in his name. Amen. As you may remember from chapters 1 through 3, there was predictions of great judgment that was coming to Israel because of their sin.

And that continues here in chapter 5, even though we're hearing about the salvation that God's going to bring. It's salvation that's going to come in the future because judgment's coming in the present. And that's what's here in verse 1.

Muster your troops, O daughter of troops, is talking about the city of Jerusalem, which is going to be sieged. And most likely what's being talked about here is the siege that's going to happen in 701 B.C.

[5 : 44] by Sennacherib, who's an Assyrian. And this is going to be part of the beginning of the downfall of Judah. This attack is going to be, we find out, embarrassing for Israel. Their ruler, who Micah can't even call a king, bring himself to call a king, and said he calls him simply a judge, is going to be struck on the cheek.

The enemies are going to get so close that they're going to be able to shame God's king. Most likely this king here is Hezekiah. And you can read more about this in the historical books and also in portions of Isaiah.

But it's not going to be well for Israel as this judgment is coming. And so as they're living in the present, looking at what's coming down the pike, which is going to be incredibly painful and destructive, it's with that that this word of hope comes in about Bethlehem.

They, like us, we may not be experiencing judgment in the same way, but they, like us, live in a world that's filled with sin and brokenness. And they, like us, need a word of hope in the midst of that.

And so as Micah likes to do, putting judgment and hope together, he starts with judgment and gives them that hope. Why is it that they should have hope in the midst of a coming judgment?

[7 : 01] Why should they have hope as destruction is on its way? What is it about this king that's going to give them hope? Why and how should they have confidence?

Last week we saw in Micah chapter 4 they could have hope in the kingdom that's coming. And this week in Micah chapter 5 it's going to be hope not in the kingdom, but in the king. The first thing we find out about this king, verse 2, is that he's born in Bethlehem.

In early 2008, Katie Couric, the news anchor, host, asked all the political candidates at the time, and the primaries hadn't completed, so it was many candidates on both sides, Democrats and Republicans.

She asked them, if you end up in the Oval Office, which book are you going to take with you? If you could take any one book besides the Bible, what would it be? There was a variety of responses, most of them seeming pretty calculated.

There was one that was a little bit surprising, and it came from Barack Obama. Obama said, I would bring one book, and it would be Team of Rivals by Doris Kearns Goodwin, which was a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Abraham Lincoln.

[8 : 12] And then he went on to talk about the ways in which he liked Lincoln's leadership style and the ways that he wanted to follow after it. Now, this wasn't a coincidence. A year earlier, when he had announced his candidacy in 2007, he had decided he was going to announce it at the old state capitol in Springfield, Illinois.

And he was doing this very intentionally. He had chosen this location to make a point, because it was the old state capitol where Abraham Lincoln had worked as a legislator, and then Obama had worked as a legislator.

It was the old state capitol where Abraham Lincoln had given his house-divided speech. It was the old state capitol where Barack Obama was going to announce that he was running for president.

And so he was trying to draw this parallel between himself and a previous ruler based on location. Now, whether you like President Obama, whether you don't like him, whether you agree with him, whether you disagree with him, that's not the point.

The point is this. Place matters. Geography matters when it comes to rulers. It mattered back then, and it matters now. Obama was trying to make a point about the kind of president that he wanted to be.

[9 : 23] God, in Micah, is making a point about the kind of ruler that his king not wants to be, but will be. God understands location and the power of political symbolism even more than we do, and so he wants to make a powerful statement about his political leader.

His leader is going to be a Bethlehem kind of leader. The original readers would have known instantly, just like news articles immediately picked up on the parallelism that was being drawn by Springfield, Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Barack Obama, so the readers of this would have understood this king that's coming, he is going to be born in the exact same birthplace as the great king of Israel, King David.

This king is going to be a David-like king. He's going to follow in the lineage of David. He's coming from the hometown and the birthplace of David.

Imagine for a second, remember, these folks are living in a time after the great kings. They're living when the kingdom has been divided. Rehoboam oversaw the division of the kingdom because of Solomon's sin, and so they're living in a time when the glory days are over.

God gives them hope by telling them this new king that's coming, he is coming from the same place as the king of the glory days.

[10 : 46] He is going to be that kind of king. David was the king that Israel looked back to over and over as the model of the best king. He was the king that God had called a man after his own heart.

And so their hope is that God is going to bring the glory days back again because it is going to be another Bethlehem king. This is going to be another king just like David.

We find out, though, that it's going to be not just like David. This king is going to be greater than David. Verse 2, at the very end, we're told, this king's coming forth is from old, from ancient days.

We could take this several ways. Some people take this phrase to mean that this is an eternal king. This is a king who had existed, had preexisted the time of this prophecy. It could mean that. We don't know for sure.

There's other ways this phrase is used in the Old Testament. We know this at least. There has been a prophecy of a king from Judah all the way back from the book of Genesis.

[11 : 51] In Genesis chapter 49, there's a prophecy that says that Judah is going to have a king and the nations are going to be under him.

And so even David had not fulfilled the prophecies about the great king coming from Judah. From of old, from the time before Israel was even a nation, it was just the patriarchs, there was an expectation that they were going to have a king who would be a ruler over him, and he would be so great and so powerful that he would rule over what we saw last week in Micah chapter 4, a reign that would include all peoples coming to him.

What kind of king is going to give them hope? It is going to be a David kind of king, but even better. We see that also in verse 4.

He is going to be great to the ends of the earth. The great king that Israel has been waiting for, the king that is even better and more glorious than King David, is on his way.

And we know that he's going to be greater and more glorious. We know that he's on his way in part because he is a king from Bethlehem. David's origins and his origins are the same.

[13 : 14] The point is this. Jesus is a political figure. He is a real king coming with real power to set real world peace on this earth.

He is not just some sentimental figure at Christmas that reminds us of a nice story, but he is a powerful political ruler who is going to bring full and final peace to this earth.

Remember that the folks reading this, receiving this, are people facing a real political threat. They have a ruler who's coming up against them, who's going to destroy them. And so, of course, they're looking for someone just as, in fact, not just as, but even more powerful to be able to defend them from the threats that are coming up against them.

This king is going to be that kind of king. And we see that in the story of Jesus' birth. Jesus comes as a political threat. He shows up in Luke 2.

And those of you who are in Sunday school have been warmed up for this. He showed up in Luke 2, and the angels show up. What do the shepherds do in response to the angels? Do they say, oh, bless their hearts?

[14 : 28] No, they're very afraid. Why? Because it's a host of angels. And the word host is a word for an army. There is a military force that shows up when Jesus is born, because the king, of course, would not show up without his army.

I grew up in a church where there was, just like here, some military folks. And there was a man who was in the military, and he was present at one time when President Bush was on a ship out in the sea.

I don't remember the exact incidents. I think there were multiple times when President Bush was on a ship. But he said, as soon as the president disappeared and was off the ship, all these divers just started popping up in the water.

They'd been underwater the whole time, just waiting, just in case something went wrong. They could come in. They weren't just gonna have protection from the air. They weren't just gonna have protection on the ship. They were gonna have protection in the water, all around them.

From an earthly perspective, we might say, man, that's so powerful. Only a great man and a great leader would have people not just on the boat, but surrounding and in the water, ready to take action in case a threat appeared.

[15 : 38] From a heavenly perspective, oh, isn't that cute? I bet he felt really safe. God's king shows up, not with men in the water, but with angels in the air, because he is a king coming to his people.

Herod is a real king who is threatened. He's so threatened that Jesus has to go into political exile in Egypt. Herod wants to kill him, and because he can't, he goes on to kill every child who's a man who's under the age of two in Bethlehem.

That's how threatened he is by Jesus. When we started this worship service this morning, we sang a political anthem. We sang Jesus shall reign.

We were declaring that he is the king who is coming, the king that is greater than David to bring peace and justice to this world. Bethlehem reminds us that Jesus is a real king who comes to shake the powers of evil to their core.

And not only does he come to do that, he's powerful enough to accomplish it. Jesus is the true and real and greatest king.

[16 : 58] He is a Bethlehem kind of king. Jesus is just as real and infinitely more powerful than John F. Kennedy and Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama and Donald Trump and Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and George H. W. Bush and Ronald Reagan.

He is no less of a leader. In fact, he is so much more. Yes, he comes to bring peace in our hearts. He also comes to bring peace to this world.

These are people who feel a real threat, a physical threat. And the promise is that Jesus is coming. We proclaim when we sing about our Bethlehem king that God's power is in this world to destroy evil and to rule us.

That's what we confess this morning in our confession of faith. And so why does Bethlehem matter? Christmas is a political holiday because we celebrate the birth and coming and reign of our king.

And he is a greater and more powerful king than any other on this earth. He is a Bethlehem king.

[18 : 22] For the folks receiving this word in the eighth century, they don't just have to look back to the glory days of David, but they also have to wait.

Something more powerful and greater than David is coming. And verse three, they're going to have to wait seven centuries to get it. Something more powerful and greater than David is coming.

And they're going to have to wait seven centuries for it to actually happen. Verse three, he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth.

Now this could be metaphorical here. It could be referring to the pains of Israel as they work through exile. It could be referring to Mary. Either way, there's going to be a long wait.

And this long wait is going to be like childbirth. It's going to be incredibly painful. And once the wait is over, who cares how painful it was?

[19 : 32] Because something so glorious and wonderful is there, that it eclipses everything that came before. Just like the people receiving this word, we also wait.

Remember I said earlier that prophecy is often not an on and off switch, but a dimmer switch. The king has come. And we still wait.

The people receiving this word waited seven centuries. We have been waiting 2,000 years for Jesus to come again. And we, like them, continue to wait in hope. Because we trust and know and believe that the Bethlehem king is coming.

And he is coming to be an even greater king. And so Jesus is a king worth waiting for. This current age will pass.

This too shall pass. And until it does, we continue every Sunday together as a church to pray the Lord's prayer and say, your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[20 : 46] Because we are waiting with hope for our great and mighty king. Now it makes sense that they were looking for a political liberator.

It makes sense that people were confused by Jesus when he did come. He's presented here as a solution to a war that's happening. But he's not just a great and mighty king.

That's not the only thing that Bethlehem tells us. Go back to verse 2. But you, O Bethlehem, Ethraphah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah.

Bethlehem is a nothing city that no one cares about. Micah chapter 1, if you remember two weeks ago, we read a list of cities that were going to be destroyed by God's judgment.

Guess which city wasn't on the list? Bethlehem. Because no one cares about Bethlehem. In Joshua chapter 15, and this is probably what's being referenced here, there's a list of all the cities that belong to the tribe of Judah.

[21 : 56] Guess which city doesn't make the cut? Bethlehem. Bethlehem is not where we would expect a ruler to come from.

It is silly to think of Bethlehem as a place of power and strength. We would expect that this would be a ruler who maybe came from Jerusalem. Maybe he's a ruler from Dan up in the north.

But no, it's a ruler from a city that no one's heard of outside of the fact that David happened to be born here. This king will be strong and he will shame the strong things of this world because he will also be a king of weakness.

He is the great and mighty king. He's also the weak and humble king. Bethlehem tells us both things. This is going to be a great leader but he's not going to come from Harvard.

He's going to have a two-year degree from a community college. He's not going to come from Colorado Springs. He's going to come from Lyman. He's not going to come from the east coast or the west coast.

[23 : 13] He's going to come from some little town in the Midwest that you've never heard of. Jesus is not just a great king. He's not just great and strong but he's humble and weak.

He is a powerful leader coming with a heavenly army and he's also a little baby born in a manger. If he was only great and strong Jesus would not save us.

And if he were only unexpected and weak he could not save us. If Jesus were only great and strong he would not save us. And if he were only humble and weak he could not save us.

And yet the Bethlehem king is both. The Bethlehem king is both great and strong and humble and weak. He is both a king showing up with his army and a baby born in a manger.

That's the kind of king that Micah is promising for these people. And so what we need is a great and strong and humble and weak king savior shepherd. One man says this he is the lion of Judah but he's also the lamb of God.

[24 : 29] He is a lion hearted lamb but a lamb like lion. He's the lion of Judah but he's also the lamb of God. He's a lion hearted lamb but a lamb like lion.

And so it's not just good news that Jesus is a great king. It is good news that he is our king. It's not just good news that Jesus is a great king.

It's good news that he is our king. And he's only able to be our king because he is both. He's king of the world and he also chose to make himself a small child.

The reason he chose to make himself a small child is because that's the only way that he could save us. He needed not just to come and rule and reign. That would be only bad news.

We saw what that was like in chapter one. But also to suffer and save. Bethlehem says both.

[25 : 34] Excuse me. And so he's great because he's God. He's unexpected because he's human. He's great because he's the most powerful king.

And he's unexpected because he came for something much greater than political liberation. The reason they are experiencing oppression is because of their sin. Remember chapters one through three.

And so this great king is going to come for both. He is going to free them from the national and political forces that are up against them. And he's also going to free them from their own sin.

We find out verse four, he is going to stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord. And of course we see this fulfilled in Jesus. We don't just see this fulfilled in Jesus in the sense that Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

We also see it fulfilled in Jesus because Jesus tells us in John chapter 10 that he is the good shepherd. Shepherds are like kings. David, by the way, was a shepherd.

[26 : 35] He protected his flock. He also nurtured them. We're told that it's the good shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep. That is the kind of shepherd that Jesus is as our Bethlehem king.

He is great and powerful. And he also dies for us. He uses that to shame the smart things of this world.

Dying on a cross as God for the sins of your people is a Bethlehem move. That's a Bethlehem kind of thing to do. That's not the way the Assyrians would have done it.

And so it's the weak things of this world that God uses to shame the strong. There's a whole section of the New Testament about this. I'm going to read a little bit for you from 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

Because God talks about this dynamic that he is going to use weak things to shame strong things. He's going to use Bethlehem kind of things to shame great rulers. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 18.

[27 : 40] For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. In other words, as one man has put it, God takes an instrument of torture, the cross, and he uses it as an instrument of salvation.

He uses something foolish and weak, a cross, to bring about something great and powerful. Then in verse 20, where is the one who is wise?

Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish? For since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. But to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For verse 25, the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. We might say the foolishness of God becoming man in a manger is wiser than men and the weakness of that little baby is stronger than men.

[29 : 02] The gospel, the news that Jesus has come and died for us as God made man, strength is Bethlehem logic. It is the weakness of this world used for strength.

Finally, we find out what happens when we have a Bethlehem king, a king who is both great and mighty and powerful, the David-like king, and also unexpected and humble and weak. What does that king lead to?

Verse 5, he shall be their peace. The people in this passage who have Assyria coming up against them are not secure, but they will be one day.

We who live in this world now at the end of 2019 are not fully and finally secure, but we will be one day. We see it in part with Jesus at his birth in Bethlehem, and we will see it in full at his second coming when he comes to bring in his kingdom and answer our prayers that he will make his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

And so he shall be our peace. He will be our peace with God, saving us from sin. And he will be our peace from God, the political peace that the folks in this passage long for and wait for in hope.

[30 : 31] And so he's going to bring us true and full and final peace. Sometimes it's hard to wrap our minds around what peace looks like.

There's a phrase that people will throw around at Christmas saying, you know, Jesus brings peace in our hearts, and he certainly does. But he also brings peace in this world. And as I think about peace, and I'll close with this, I'm reminded of a Peanuts cartoon.

I was still alive, by the way, when Charles Schultz died. I'm probably the last of a generation that remembers him. I remember one of the things my brothers and I love to do is grab the cartoons from the weekend, the weekend Washington Post.

When we subscribed, that was what we tried to secure and compete over. And there's one where Charlie Brown talks about security. He's talking with Peppermint Patty. And she says this, Lately, everything seems to bother me.

Charlie Brown, how do you mean? Peppermint Patty, what do you think security is, Chuck? This is what Charlie Brown says. Security.

[31 : 36] Security is sleeping in the back seat of the car. When you're a little kid, and you've been somewhere with your mom and dad, and it's night, and you're riding home in the car, you can sleep in the back seat.

You don't have to worry about anything. Your mom and dad are in the front seat, and they do all the worrying. They take care of everything.

Peppermint Patty says this, that's real neat. Charlie Brown replies, but it doesn't last. Suddenly, you're grown up, and it can never be that way again.

Suddenly, it's over, and you'll never get to sleep in the back seat again. Never. Peppermint Patty, Never? Charlie Brown, absolutely never.

Peppermint Patty, hold my hand, Chuck. Why does it matter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem? It matters because he is the king that brings us true peace and security.

[32 : 46] We know that when it's dark, he's the one who has everything under control. We know that we don't have to worry about anything because he is in the front seat, and he will take care of the worrying.

He will take care of everything. He will be our peace, and it will last forever. Why does it matter that Jesus was born in Bethlehem?

It matters because he is a great and mighty king, and it matters because he's a humble and a weak king, and because he's both and not just one. He will be our peace.

Please pray with me. I will be our peace. I run for you.

You see you soon. From yours...