

## Micah 5:2 Advent 2019 "O Little town of Bethlehem"

### CCH Sermon 8<sup>th</sup> December

- **V2**
  - *"Hope, whether we realise it or not, all of us are looking for hope*
  - *Real, life changing hope.*
  - *When good things happen like the birth of a child or a new relationships we catch a glimpse of it. But at other times, life can feel a real struggle, and even feel a little hopeless".*
- If that sounds familiar, that's how the video on our **website** begins!
- Felt **HOPE** such a relevant topic, that we wanted to major on it. One of the reasons for our church being here.
  - Isn't hope what the **election candidates** are promising- a new future that will sort things out better than the other parties.
  - Isn't hope what the **parcels under the tree** are promising- toys and gadgets and stuff that will improve our lives.
  - Isn't Hope what a **new day, or a new year promises?** Fresh starts and possibilities.
- We all desperately long for hope. But where is it found?
  - Micah 5:2 is going to tell us.
    - Our search is over.
    - Our Joy has begun.
    - This is what we were made for.
- Last week finished Mark
  - Next week first Christmas event.
  - Like last year: OT predictions: Isaiah 7 (virgin), Isa 9 (govt shoul).
  - This... Perhaps one of the most famous.
- Bit of background on Micah with the help of a powerpoint.
  - His name means "Who is like the Lord"- weaves in in **7:8**
  - Lived around same time as Isaiah (**730s BC**)
  - Book in **3 Sections** of Judgement and Hope:
    - God promises **judgement** focusing on sin
    - God promises hope for remnant focusing on a **shepherd**.
  - We are **here**: middle of second hope section.
- Only going to zoom in on 1 verse.
  - But an amazing verse cos tells us hundreds of years before he came the place, person, plan where HOPE is to be found.

## 1) HOPE IS FOUND IN AN INSIGNIFICANT PLACE

- **Bethlehem.** O little town! **Ephrathah** was an older name for Bethlehem and also the surrounding area
  - For us Famous, because the most famous person in history born there.
- **But for Micah at the time... Small.** O Little town
  - Clans of Judah- rem 12 tribes... Then clans.
  - So small that when a list of 100 towns & villages in **Josh 15**, Bethlehem is too small to mention.
  - Small town- small village back then, and today similar size to Huntingdon. 25k people.
- **Not unknown in OT...** Cos if go way back to roots to where royalty began when Samuel anointed smallest youngest of Jesse's sons in Bethlehem. Home of Naomi, Ruth, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.
  - But he was the littlest and smallest son of Jesse.
  - And here LITTLE town of Bethlehem
- Like saying key to the country's future for the general election found in
  - Rodney Road, Huntingdon.
  - Falcon Drive, Hartford
  - Hill Farm, Abbots Ripton.
- But this small town is where God was going to step onto the planet!
- Micah predicts 700years ahead, this is where God's King will be born.
- **➡ There's a lesson here for us.**
  - First don't be surprised that God acts in surprising ways and in surprising places!
  - When studied 1 Sam 1 saw things start with a "certain man" from an unknown in the hill country and his childless wife. God's trademark. Difficult circumstances in little known places.
  - O **Little** town of Bethlehem.
    - Look at Bethlehem in year 700BC. Tiny village in hills.
    - Look now- there will be thousands flocking over Christmas.
  - I think there's a lesson here for anyone who is feeling a bit low pre Christmas.
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- Maybe as you look at the flashy Christmas adverts compared to the disappointments and discouragements in your last year you don't feel very important, very strategic or very glamorous.
- Just an ordinary person from an ordinary place.
- Don't be discouraged. You are just the sort of candidate to be part of God's good plans.
- ▲ **Insignificant** place. Road in Edmonton. N London.
- **But** Gladys Aylward.
  - **Small**- Little woman Poor- housemaid from Edmonton. Used life savings to get on train to China- missionary.
  - Incredibly used by God. 27 days rescued 100 orphans during time China invaded.
  - Her life (rather inaccurately retold in parts) was turned into a film starring Ingrid Bergman).
  - Above all through her whom many people came to Christ.
  - **1) HOPE IS FOUND IN AN INSIGNIFICANT PLACE.**

## 2) HOPE IS FOUND IN A UNIFYING PERSON

- Who is going to be born in Bethlehem?
- A ruler who will bring everyone together.
- Two things here. First is **royalty**
  - Normally think of Jerusalem as place for king to be born.
  - Place of the monarchy, the palace.
  - And a signal that problem with royalty, cos Jerusalem the place of power and the king.
- Indeed 5:1- King seems to have been struck in a siege situation. Not even able to defend his own face. In Micah's day (1:1) an array of good, bad and ugly kings.
- Hope of a new leader in a time of a hopeless leaders.
- Indeed by the end of the OT there will seem to be no King.
- But here's a promise of royalty rebooted.
- A fresh start for the monarchy
- Look at some of what this King will do...
  - V4 Shepherd.

- V5 Peace
- V6 Rescue
- V7 Refreshment (like dew)
- V8-9 Unstoppable triumph
- V10-15 destr
- So a **ruler**
- Second this ruler will be **unifying**
- Look carefully at the verse.
  - Not ruler in Israel.
  - But Over Israel.
  - This was a time post Solomon where country had been divided for 200 years. 10 tribes in the North (Israel) and 2 tribes in the South (Judah). Different kings.
  - And this King will unite them all.
- ▲ Have we ever known such divisions in our **country**?
  - The referendum result Leave 51.9%, Remain 48.1%
  - And the last 3 years haven't brought much clarity.
  - But we are divided over
    - economics,
    - climate change,
  - And is it me, or are people more happy to shout at each other and argue with each other.
  - Of course we won't always agree, but we can at least
- And in our **neighbourhood**?
  - You'll remember the shameful racial hatred a few years ago.
- own **homes**?
  - It's really difficult for marriages to stay united.
  - Anyone who's married will know it's a battle
  - Misunderstandings and niggles can creep in which grow into full blown fights and feuds.
- We need someone who can unify us.
  - And it won't be Boris Johnson or Jeremy Corbyn.
- But the Prince of Peace unites us together, because he unites us to God
  - And as we've often said in marriage prep: Spokes of a wheel.
- There's **hope** in a ruler born in Bethlehem who will reunify the people.
- **HOPE IS FOUND IN... AN INSIGNIFICANT PLACE// A UNIFYING PERSON**

### 3) HOPE IS FOUND IN AN ANCIENT PLAN

#### V2c.

- Hang on this King is not some new idea
- According to our verse he's been the plan since ancient times.
- What's that referring to?
- Well Micah himself uses the words in this verse in chapter 7 to look back to what God had been doing earlier in the OT.
- What was that?
  - Promises to Abraham
  - Working themselves out in a great rescue from Egypt
  - Pointing forward to a King
- The Old Testament is a wonderful story of the coming of God's rescue plan focusing on what God has been preparing for centuries.
- And indeed this individual goes back before history.
  
- ▲ As you order your Christmas presents/Turkey online...
  - Your delivery will arrive between 11.43 and 12.43
  - Your driver will be Steve
    - Very helpful.
      - There's no doubt who he is
      - And what you've got to do.
- These OT verses, 700BC are the delivery prediction.
  - Well God's got a delivery to come.
  - It's always been the plan.
  - The PLAN is A PERSON (unifying ruler) from a PLACE (Bethlehem). HIS SON!
- So as humanity we need to be in no doubt
  - God is going to send a wonderful Shepherd rescuer ruler
  - To Bethlehem.
- So now you see why the Christmas story is so special.
- Are you in any doubt that Jesus is the ONE?!
- They were in doubt at the time!

Fascinating debate in Jesus Life. (look it up in John 7 some time) p1073.

- Hang on. Is this the Messiah? Have the authorities decided he is?
  - He's certainly performing enough signs!
  - Bit like Mark: some say "Surely this man is the prophet"
  - "Other say he's the Messiah".
- But then problem. *How can the Messiah come from Galilee* v41
  - We all know Jesus is from Nazareth, and has been living in the North in Galilee- Him and mates have a Northern accent!
- So someone says- "look up the Bible".
  - V42 Does not the Scripture say that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?
  - V43. V44.
  - Galilee is in the North.
  - Bethlehem is in the South.
  - You think he's not the King cos King has to come from Bethlehem.
- But you want someone to say "look up Jesus' birth certificate".
  - young mother and husband to be trekking back to Bethlehem because of a random census by a megalomaniac king who wants to count his people.
  - So where does Jesus get born?
  - Bethlehem. Matthew 2:1 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea".
  
- Hope is found in 1, 2, 3.
- Hope is found in JESUS!
- ☞ If you are looking for hope in a new relationship, or under the Christmas tree, or in the election, you will be sadly disappointed.
- Even in good places like family, there'll one day be death.

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth the Everlasting Light.*

*THE HOPES and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary.*

Let's pray

Let's sing final verse as a prayer.

Then Simon will lead us in prayer.