

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

CCH Sermon 8th 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.