

SERMON FOR DECEMBER 19, 2021

TEXT: MICAH 5:2-5

THEME: O LITTLE HOUSE OF BREAD

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. **3** Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. **4** And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. **5** And he shall be their peace.

In the name of Jesus:

One of the great traditions of the Christmas season is the Gingerbread House. For years our family would build these little houses made of gingerbread. I will admit, I am not a builder, and I don't have an artistic nor a construction worker bone in my body, so I haven't really built one of these houses but my kids have, and I have watched them. They first carefully place a base underneath, then put up the walls using an edible icing called royal icing to connect the walls together, along with the roof. Once constructed, other icing is placed on the outside, to make it look like the house is blanketed in snow, with the candies serving as outside decorations. Once completed, the gingerbread house is a cute little masterpiece of construction, and while a gingerbread house is certainly edible, it mainly serves as a decorative

ornament for the holiday season, to be thrown away along with the Christmas wrapping paper at the end of the Christmas season.

Long ago there was another house, so to speak, made of bread. The little town of Bethlehem, spoken of by the prophet Micah, was a real city in a real place known as Judah. Not many people realize this, but there were actually two Bethlehems in the area. Bethlehem Zebulun was in the northern part of Israel, outside the city of Nazareth. This Bethlehem spoken of by the prophet Micah zeroes in on the smaller city, the insignificant village of Bethlehem Ephrathah. This little place was known as the city of David, it was so small you couldn't even call it a city, it stood outside of the larger city of Jerusalem, so small you couldn't find it on a map. It was, in the words of Micah, "too little to be among the clans of Judah." But this small insignificant place was the birthplace of the great king of Israel, King David.

When Micah wrote this prophecy, King David was long gone as king. He had died over 500 years before. But Micah here speaks of another king who was to be born in Bethlehem, "one who is to be ruler of Israel, and whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days," meaning that this King would be an altogether different King, a King who has an eternal past.

This King would be a Shepherd King, like David. Shepherds in the New Testament days were looked down upon by many, but not so in the Old

Testament times. Back in the Old Testament, it was thought that a good leader would be such if he learned to first be a shepherd. If he could handle unruly and wayward sheep, then he certainly would have the attributes to be fit for a king. Most of the great leaders in the Old Testament, men such as Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Moses, and David, were first shepherds. So this New King, born in Bethlehem, would be a New King David, one who had an eternal past, and one who would be able to bring to His people peace and security for eternity.

And so, on a Christmas night over 2000 years ago, a new King was born. He was born in Bethlehem, and angels sang at His birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth." He was born of the virgin Mary, and given the name Jesus, which means He will save His people from their sins. The Savior was born in the town of Bethlehem, a town which translated means House of Bread.

Later in Jesus' life and ministry, our Lord refers to Himself as the Bread of Life. He says: "Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." **34** They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." **35** Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me

shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. **36** But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. **37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. **38** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. **39** And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. **40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the Last Day.” (John 6: 32-40).

Jesus also refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd. “ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” He came to find the lost sheep, the wayward sheep, the sheep also known as sinful people, people who are hurting, who have lost their way, people who are in need of forgiveness, healing, and hope.

This is why Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem, to do the will of Him who sent Him. He came down from heaven to be born, to live, and die, then rise again to give life, not a temporary existence but real life, physical life, an eternal life, for all who believe in Him. He says that everyone who believes

in Him will have this life, and on the Last Day He will raise up all who believe in Him to live with Him forever.

And so Jesus, the Bread of Life, comes to you today. Humbly, in the forms of bread and wine, to give to you Himself, His very body broken and very blood poured out for you on the cross. He gives you here in this Sacrament real food, eternal food, for your eternal salvation.

The food He gives in Himself is nothing at all like the food we are accustomed to eat. The food He gives will not spoil. Unlike the gingerbread houses we make that adds no nutritional value to our diets whatsoever and will eventually either fall apart or be thrown away, His food is real food, given to forgive you all of your sins, given to strengthen you for the days and journey ahead, given to feed your soul so that you will live forever.

And so He comes to you this day, giving you the food you need for your soul and your salvation. He comes in with and under the bread and wine to offer to you His very body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins, for your eternal salvation. He comes and says take and eat, take and drink, believe and live. For the Good news of Christmas is that from a town called the House of Bread a Savior has been given to you, he is Jesus Christ your Lord.

Amen