



READ: Micah 5:2-5a (NIRV)

The Lord says, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come for me a ruler over Israel. His family line goes back to the early years of your nation. It goes all the way back to days of long ago." The LORD will hand over his people to their enemies. That will last until the pregnant woman bears her promised son. Then the rest of his relatives in Judah will return to their land. That promised son will stand firm and be a shepherd for his flock. The LORD will give him the strength to do it. The LORD his God will give him the authority to rule. His people will live safely. His greatness will reach from one end of the earth to the other. And he will be our peace.

ENTER THE STORY:

From the outside, there was nothing special about this little town called Bethlehem. Out of all the mighty places in Judah, Bethlehem was the smallest, which usually meant it wasn't very important either. Yet it is in the middle of the Christmas story, just as it has been in many of the other stories we've read along the way.

It was the town Naomi and Ruth returned to when they had no where else to go, and the place where Ruth met her family rescuer, Boaz.

It was the town where David was born, the shepherd king from among the sons of Jesse, who was also the youngest and smallest and of his brothers.

It was the town where Jesus, the future King of the world, was born. Just like the ordinary town he was born in, he came in the most ordinary way...in a stable outside with the animals.

Isn't it just like God to use this tiny, nothing-special-about-it town to bring his own Son into this world? God doesn't determine WORTH or VALUE by what the world thinks, and he isn't tempted by the biggest, brightest and shiniest cities. God LOVES taking the weakest, the poorest, and the least important things and using them to show his glory to the world.

So out of Bethlehem, whose name means "House of Bread," will come Jesus, the "Bread of Life" himself. The tiny baby boy who will grow up and give so much more than just food to those who believe in him. He will give up his life in order to save them!

From the outside, there was nothing special about this little town called Bethlehem, and THAT was the point. God does extraordinary things with the ordinary!

Our song for today is "O Little Town of Bethlehem." As you listen or sing along, pay close attention to the words!

Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

PRAY: God, thank you for helping us see worth in the things this world despises as weak and useless. Help us to see more of your glory today. Amen.