



READ: Micah 5:2-4 (NIV)

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

ENTER THE STORY:

From the outside, there was nothing special about this little town called Bethlehem. Out of all of the mighty clans of Judah, Bethlehem was the smallest, which usually meant the least important as well, and yet, it is CENTRAL to 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 nowhere else to go and the place where Ruth met her kinsman redeemer, Boaz. Their union continued the lineage of Jesse's family tree. It was the town where David was born, the shepherd king from among the sons of Jesse, who was also the smallest and seemingly least important of his brothers. But this is the place 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, insignificant town to bring his own Son into this world? God doesn't determine VALUE by the world's standards, and he isn't tempted by the biggest, brightest and shiniest cities. God is in the business of taking the weakest, the poorest, and the most insignificant and using them to reveal his glory to the world.

So out of Bethlehem, whose name means "House of Bread," will come the "Bread of Life" himself, the Christ child who proclaims during his earthly ministry, "...whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

Out of Ephrathah (Eff-raw-thaw), which means "fruitful," comes the One who is the first fruits of our salvation, giving us hope that one day, we too will be raised to eternal life just like him.

From the outside, there was nothing special about this little town called Bethlehem, and THAT was the point. The town is not special, but WHO comes out of this town will change everything!

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

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 the value in the things this world despises as weak and useless. Help us to see more of your glory today and hunger after the "Bread of life," who alone can satisfy all of our needs. Amen.