



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

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. 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. 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. And he shall be their peace.

ENTER THE STORY:

From the outside, there was nothing special about this little town called Bethlehem. Out of all the mighty clans of Judah, Bethlehem was the smallest, which usually meant it was the least important as well. 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 no where 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 most insignificant of his brothers.

And 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, insignificant town to bring his own Son into this world? God doesn't determine WORTH by the world's standards, and he isn't tempted by the biggest, brightest and shiniest cities with the most to offer. God is in the business of using the weakest, the poorest, and the most insignificant 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)

And out of Ephrathah, whose name 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.

This little town actually inspired a popular Christmas carol called, "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

As we close out our advent for today, it would be a great idea to look up this son and listen to it. When you do, 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 worth in the things this world despises as weak and useless. Use us this season, Lord, to share your love and glory with others. Amen.