

**Sermon    December 22, 2024    Micah 5:2-4**

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.

**Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen!**

When we hear these words from Micah, we typically focus on the first part where it talks about how the Savior will be born in Bethlehem. Even the religious leaders during Herod's reign were familiar with this prophecy, for when the wise men asked herod where to find the One born King of the Jews, he sent them to Bethlehem. That didn't work out so well for Bethlehem.

But here it says things will work out well for us. The One born in Bethlehem will shepherd us in the strength of the Lord, and he will cause us to dwell securely. The shepherding part has come true for us, but the dwelling securely is mostly for another time and in another place.

Shepherds serve two main important roles on behalf of their sheep. They feed and protect their flock. First, they take their flock out to green pastures where they can graze on good, delicious grass. Well, delicious I suppose to the sheep's taste. Sheep don't know much about the change of seasons and where to go for the best grass. Shepherds do, and they lead their flocks to the greenest pastures where they can feed. In some parts of the world, shepherds even have cabins or tents where they stay with the sheep for extended periods of time because its too far to go back and forth each day from home to the good pasture lands.

Of course we identify Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He says so himself. Jesus knows where the greenest pastures lie. They are his Word. As it says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4 As we daily consume the life-giving Word of God, the Good Shepherd feeds us and keeps us healthy and strong.

In the words of the prophet Micah, it also says Jesus will cause us to dwell securely. Security is a condition in our world that has been dwindling for some time. Last week it was reported that the US Government is taking a hard look at banning some electronic devices made in China. It says some 65% of internet routers used in American homes are manufactured by the Chinese company TP-Link. These devices make the internet available to all the phones, tablets, computers, and TV's in your house. Word is that these particular devices have either been purposely modified by the Chinese government so they can be used for hacking US companies and agencies, or the devices are so poorly designed in terms of security features that they are easily commandeered for the same task. What fun! We have three devices made by TP-Link here in church. If the Chinese are listening in, then we just have one word for them: *Repent*

*and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins!* Well, that's 9 words but you know what I mean.

Like with those Keeping out the unwanted is a big part of being secure. Locked doors help keep out thieves. (Don't forget about the windows.) Shuttered windows keep out branches and debris in high winds. Sand bags keep out the water. Passwords keep out bad actors on the internet. There are so many things we need to keep out to be safe! The list is long. But we know in this life we will never be completely safe. There are just too many things that can go wrong. And that only has to do with the material world!

The Old Testament prophets, folks like John the Baptist, and Jesus warned about dangers on the spiritual side of things. There are things we want to keep out there as well. And what we want to keep out is God's judgement against us because of our fallen nature and our daily wrongs. It's like we confess in the creed, "From thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead." Gulp!

We can lock our doors, shutter the windows, batten the hatches, and get the latest in security software, but they are nothing against the likes of the judgement of God! For that there is only one defense. It is the crucified and risen Savior. By his blood we receive in the Lords Supper are cleansed from all sin. Forgiven, we will rise like Jesus to life everlasting in the goodness, power, and glory of the Lord.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lead us to green pastures and still waters. But we know it's true that He also leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. Yet we need not doubt his salvation or be overcome with fear, because through every high and low and every back and forth we dwell secure as members of the house of the Lord because of Him who was born in the little town of Bethlehem. We look

to and welcome the Savior soon to come, Jesus Christ the Lord. Jesus Christ OUR Lord. And Savior. Amen!

**The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in him. Amen.**

Pastor Ron Breight                  Christ Lutheran Church   Forest Hills, Pennsylvania

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