

Christmas and the Church

Insignificant Greatness

Micah 5:1 – 5

I. Intro

- A. Doing Christmas messages entitled “Christmas and the Church” looking at the relationship between the church and time of year; seen relationship in preparing the way for the Lord’s return, last time in Jesus familiar with suffering and taking our sins upon Himself at the cross**
- B. Today, want us to look at greatness**
- C. Passage in Matthew 20, mother of two of Jesus’ disciples came to Him and requested that when Jesus entered His kingdom that one of her sons would be placed on Jesus’ right and one on His left – positions of authority and power**
 - i. Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV)**
 - 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.
 - 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,
 - 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--
 - 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- D. Look at the birthplace of Jesus – small little town called Bethlehem (Ephrathah – preferred name for the Jews); most estimate normal population of Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth was under 1000, although it would have been way more than that during time of Christ’s birth because of people returning because of census ordered by Caesar Augustus**
 - i. Other week, population of Jerusalem (Bethlehem only 5 miles away) around 600,000**
 - ii. Bethlehem definitely a very small, insignificant little village**
- E. Background to Micah passage: prophecy on the birth of Christ and where the birth would take place – specifically, Bethlehem**
 - i. Israelites about to be taken captive by Babylonians and Assyrians result of God’s judgment upon them; nation split**
 - ii. There had emerged in Israel a wealthy upper class which had also brought about corruption among the people**
 - iii. Corruption included idolatry, seizure of property without cause; failure of civil, religious, and prophetic leadership; corrupt business practices, and violence**
 - iv. Micah testifying as God’s prophet to these specific sins prevalent in both kingdoms**

- v. God now carries out His judgment on Israel and Judah through the Assyrians and Babylonians
- vi. But as Micah brings this warning of judgment from God, he also brings prophecy of hope and peace

F. READ Micah 5:1 – 5

- G. **Question:** So what do we see in passage regarding the relationship between the birth of Christ and the church, people of God, body of Christ? What is meant by insignificant greatness?

II. Prepared Against Attacks of Enemy

A. REFER v. 1

- B. Don't speak about it much but the church is an army; we daily face a battle against the dark, evil, spiritual forces of this world

C. Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

- D. The church of God needs to start “gathering the troops”; understand, if the church of God, its people are divided, we will not be able to withstand, persevere in this spiritual battle

E. Question: How do we prepare to fight against the schemes of Satan?

Ephesians 6 is one place we get the answer – put on the full armor of God

- i. **1** – Belt of truth; belt used to bind soldier's clothing to body so doesn't hinder fighting – gives freedom of movement; belt of truth – putting on Christ, who is Truth – being in Word of God which points us to truth – living in truth
- ii. **2** – Breastplate of righteousness; used to protect the heart of soldier; believer's heart is to be focused on Christ and His righteousness and that focus must be protected and preserved at all cost
- iii. **3** – Feet fitted with readiness; feet ready to march and do battle; feet should always be ready to march carrying the Gospel of Christ to the world
- iv. **4** – Shield of faith; large oblong shield that protected the whole body from fiery darts thrown by the enemy; shield of faith protects us from Satan's fiery darts he hurls at us constantly such as: questioning our salvation, doubting God, feelings of unworthiness, discouragement, depression, etc.
- v. **5** – Helmet of salvation; covered head of soldier; helmet of salvation is weapon of deliverance, protecting our mind and thoughts from all that is ungodly; In Romans, *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*

- vi. **6 – Sword of the Spirit, Word of God; sword used for both offense and defense; sword of Spirit, Holy Scripture used by believer to be prepared for Satan’s attacks (offense); and fend off attacks when Satan does attack (defense) just as Jesus did when tempted by Satan in the desert**
- F. **All of these provided to us by our Leader, our Commander, Jesus Christ to fight this spiritual battle we face as the Lord’s army; also to keep us prepared against the attack from the enemy of God and enemy of believers in Christ**

III. Insignificance doesn’t mean Unimportant

- A. **Mentioned earlier how small, little village Bethlehem was but, it was the place where God chose for the birth of His one and only begotten Son, Savior of the whole world**
- B. **Question: Why Bethlehem? Why not Jerusalem, Rome, or even Samaria, a larger more prominent, more significant place?**
 - i. **A clue: 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV)**
 - 27 **But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.**
 - 28 **He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, (things that would be considered “significant” by the world would be made “insignificant” and things of God considered by the world as “insignificant” would be made “significant”**
 - 29 **so that no one may boast before him.**
 - ii. **It is the Lord who makes the weak strong, the small great, and who makes something out of nothing**
- C. **Question: What does this have to do with the church, more specifically our own church?**
- D. **In the eyes of “religious elite” of this day we might be considered small, insignificant but just as the Savior of the world came forth from a small little insignificant village, so the Savior of the world can come forth to this community, state, nation, world from a small little rural church and we can be of great significance on transforming the lives of many, many people**
- E. **We don’t ever need to put limits on ourselves because of how small we may think we are or how insignificant we might consider ourselves in comparison to other churches – it’s not us that makes great things possible but it’s the Lord that makes ALL things possible**

- F. **That's what is meant by insignificant greatness – that only happens when men, women, people of all ages (the church) surrender their lives to the work of the Holy Spirit within them**

IV. **Peace Must Rule**

- A. **Colossians 3:15 (NIV)**

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body **(the church)** you were called to peace. ...

- B. **If Christ rules in your heart then peace must also rule because – v. 5a: *He will be their peace***

- C. **When Christ was born, what was the song of the angels: Luke 2:14 (NKJV)**

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

- D. **This is so important because one of Satan's schemes is to cause division, separation, ill-will toward others especially in the church**

- E. **When Jesus gave the promise of the Holy Spirit to His disciples he also told them: John 14:27 (NIV)**

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

- i. **If the presence of God's Holy Spirit lives within you, you have the ability to be man or woman of peace**
- ii. **Remember Jesus said: Matthew 5:9 (NIV)**

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called *children* of God.

- F. **Philippians 4:7 (NIV)**

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- i. **It's the peace of God stands guard at sentry post of our lives protecting our hearts and minds from any anger, bitterness, hatred towards others, especially those who are our bothers and sisters in Christ**

V. **Close**

- A. **It's time for us as the church to be prepared against the attacks of our enemy the devil; we need to be better about training with the spiritual weapons God has provided for us in this spiritual warfare**

- B. **We may be small, insignificant body of Christ in the grander scheme of things but it's time for us as the church to surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to work in us to accomplish great things for the kingdom of our Lord and Savior**

- C. **In all things, we must seek peace, and allow the Spirit in us to mold us into people of peace for ... *peace on earth, and goodwill towards all men***