

Advent Sermon Series: “A Brief History of Salvation”
“The Babe from Bethlehem”
Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.
Sunday, December 20, 2020

The age-old question persists to today: can something good come of out something small? E.g., Randy Newman attempted to address this issue in his tongue-in-cheek song, “Short People”:

“They got little hands
And little eyes
And they walk around
Tellin' great big lies
They got little noses
And tiny little teeth
They wear platform shoes
On their nasty little feet”

It should be noted that Randy Newman included the lyrics in this song:

Short people are just the same
As you and I
(A fool such as I)
All men are brothers
Until the day they die
(It's a wonderful world)

I have seen online that the average height of a man in the U.S. is 5’9”— so that puts me on short side, since am 5’8”! But still, the knock on small things persists, and such a view is frequently contradicted by the evidence. E.g., in 1991 Ian Woosnam won the Master’s golf tournament, and he was 5’4”! E.g., the Heisman trophy winner Doug Flutie had this big criticism on him during his NFL career— he was too short. He was 5’10”. Fast forward to the 2019 draft and another 5’10”

quarterback was the first overall pick in the NFL draft—Kyler Murray. It is interesting the quarterbacks we have in the NFL who are 6 feet tall and shorter—Drew Brees (6') and Russell Wilson (5'11"). E.g., one of the greatest NFL running backs of all time is Barry Sanders, who was 5'8". E.g., one of the wealthiest men in the world, worth about 55 billion dollars, is Michael Bloomberg, who is 5'8". There is even a knock on people who come from small places, as we will see in our text today.

READ Micah 5:2-5a (p. 865)

CONTEXT: Micah is a Judean prophet around the late 700's BC, a contemporary of Isaiah. He is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:18, where Jeremiah quotes from Micah 3:12. Micah pronounces judgement on both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judea. READ chapter 3, vv 1-4,9-12. He has just given a word of judgement and destruction in 5:1, and now he turns with a message of hope.

READ v 2. "The phrase 'Bethlehem of Ephrathah' designates that the ruler came not only from a different Bethlehem from the one in Zebulun (cf. Joshua 19:15) but also from the ancient Bethlehem from which David comes. Cf. Ruth 1:1-2; 4:11; 1 Samuel 17:12; Matthew 2:1-6; Luke 2:1-4; Romans 1:1-3." We at times see great, influential people come from small places. E.g., Larry Bird was called the "Hick from French Lick", because he was from French Lick, Indiana. E.g., the NFL Network rated Jerry Rice as the greatest NFL football player of all time, and he grew up in Crawford, MS, population of 652. E.g., Joe Burrow grew up in The Plains, Ohio, where he went to high school, and that town has a population of about 3,000. All this shows that God can never be accused of sizeism— He makes great things come of of small and large packages. He made salvation come out of a planet that is a speck of dust in comparison with the size

of the universe. And He made the Savior come of out a small, no-where town a few miles south of Jerusalem. And this town Bethlehem had a big reputation, for David was born there. Thus we have messianic overtones to our passage.

“What is fascinating is that this One to be born in Bethlehem was to be from ancient times, which could refer to either early times in history (cf. 7:20) or to God Himself (Habakuk 1:12). Either way, this person to come is supernatural. ‘This is in keeping with the expectation of Isaiah in 9:6 where the future King is called ‘*ēl* (‘God’), an appellation used only of God by Isaiah’ (T.E. McComiskey, ‘Micah’ in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 427).” In Micah 7:20 and Habakuk 1:12 the word translated “ancient times”, עִדָּן, appears in both passages. Please note that the Hebrew originally reads “his going forth is from ancient times, from days long ago”, and the Septuagint has it literally, “his going forth is from the beginning, from eternal days”. READ Isaiah 9:6. This kind of reminds me of the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, where George Bailey meets with his guardian angel who appears as a man in the flesh— Clarence. Clarence was actually a man who lived long ago and was now in heaven hoping to get his angel wings. It takes a while for George finally to believe in Clarence’s true identity, and it takes some convincing! Well, Micah is telling us that such a person whose origin was from long ago will come to earth.

“This One to come will act as a shepherd who will rule over His people with God’s loftiness and peace. Cf. Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 34:23-24; John 10:10-11; Philippians 4:7.” This would have been especially important to the Jewish audience listening to Micah’s message, because, as we read earlier from chapter 3, the people were used to injustice and their bones being broken, and even the religious leaders were guilty! Thus the great need for a ruler to come who would be a Shepherd of Shalom— of peace. The Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם carries a deeper meaning than a feeling of goodness— it means such things as being whole, intact; prosperity, peace, ease, unaffectedness (from W.L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew*

and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 371).. In Isaiah 9:6-7 we read about the Prince of Peace coming from David's line who will bring "endless peace". In Ezekiel 34:23-24 we read of a future person from David's line coming who will shepherd God's people. Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd in John 10:11, and Paul speaks of the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guarding your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus in Philipians 4:7. Everyone needs a good shepherd—the Shepherd of Shalom—in their lives. E.g., I recall hearing a story where a mother who was divorced had four daughters and the mother was convicted of a serious crime and went to jail, and the father of the children and his new wife took the four girls in and cared for them, and their step-mother adopted the girls and became a true mother to them. E.g., I know of a family who allowed a teenage friend of their son's to live with them because of a bad home life. That is what God wants to be for you and me. He wants to take our lives of chaos and pride and arrogance and give us life. E.g., I think of a man who had a wonderful work from God in his life away from drugs and alcohol. E.g., I think of a woman who has had a beautiful work in her life away from drugs and alcohol. E.g., I think of my life where I was heading toward trouble that could have wrecked my life and set me in a pasture where I could grow, but God brought people in my life like my sister Madolyn to reach me. Perhaps you are wandering in the wilderness of the ways of the world, and today you need to come home and let the shepherd of peace, the Shepherd of Shalom, take over your life.

"Who rules over you and me?" Let us ask this question in our quiet times this week if we know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Let us ask this question today if we don't know Jesus in that way, and ask Him to be our ruler, our shepherd of peace.