

Advent in a Small-Town

Christmas 2020

Micah 5:2-4 (CSB)

²Bethlehem Ephrathah,
you are small among the clans of Judah;
one will come from you
to be ruler over Israel for me.

His origin is from antiquity,
from ancient times.

³Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return
to the people of Israel.

⁴He will stand and shepherd them
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majestic name of the LORD his God.
They will live securely,
for then his greatness will extend
to the ends of the earth.

Intro. I love small towns.

A. Licking is the largest town Julie and I have ever lived and this place feels like home.

1. Although we didn't experience our childhoods here, we have certainly grown up here.

2. And there is no place I would rather be, and no other people I'd rather minister to.

B. It's hard to believe that not everyone likes small-towns.

1. For some, we live in the middle-of-nowhere.

2. Many people will call places like Licking or my hometown of Koshkonong are Po-Dunk.

3. If you've wondered what the definition of Po-Dunk it is Greek for a town with a Dollar General and a school with no football team.

C. But, what if I told you that Jesus loves the small-town even more than I do?

1. Through our series in Thessalonians, we talked a lot about Jesus' Second Coming.

2. I used Greek words like "Parousia" a lot which means "Coming".

3. A word that I did not use is the word "Advent".

1. Advent is Latin and means "coming".

A. Every December, Christians all across the world celebrate Advent, the First Coming of Christ.

1. Advent is a time to celebrate the blessings and the promises of Jesus' first coming.

2. Advent serves as a hopeful reminder that Jesus has another Advent coming, what we call the Parousia or Second Coming.

B. There is something unique about small-town people like us reading the Advent story.

1. People in the city might not imagine all of the hotel rooms being booked, but it can happen here.

2. People in the city might not grasp the rural surroundings that welcomed Jesus' birth, but we can.

3. What amazes me is that Jesus' first coming didn't take place in the city or amongst a crowd, but among the people of a very small town called Bethlehem.

C. Question: If God thought a small-town like Bethlehem was the perfect place for Jesus' birth, why do we often think that nothing good can come from small-towns like Licking?

1. For the next few weeks, this is what I want to share with you.

2. I want to encourage all of us that God uses small towns and small places to do Great things.

3. **When we are followers of Jesus, where we live and where we come from is not a limitation.**

2. Micah contains the prophecy of where the Messiah would be born.

A. In the Christmas story, when Herod asks where the Messiah was to be born, the Magi knew it was Bethlehem because of Micah 5.

1. All along, God knew the world would need a Savior

2. And He planned for that Savior to make His first appearance in the small-town of Bethlehem.

a. Bethlehem is called small and insignificant in the Hebrew.

b. One writer says that it was insignificant in both size and quality.

c. Surely, Jerusalem would have been a better place for a newborn King!

d. But God loves the out of the way places.

3. Most of us would have overlooked this small-town at the expense of a larger city.

1. For example, many of us are surprised when a favorite movie star or sports star is from a small-town.
2. We are rarely surprised when they come from a larger area, with bigger schools, and more people.
3. Even small-town people like us often have a bias against small-town people like us.

B. But God doesn't have a bias against the small-things.

1. In fact, He often cherishes the small places.
2. Jesus' favorite place to pray was at the large city, right? No but in the wilderness and in the rural.
3. Jesus often overlooked the Samaritan, or the poor, or the crippled because they didn't have much value...NO. He valued them as someone who was created in the same image of God that the richest were created in.

C. We should not be surprised that God chose the small place of Bethlehem to be where the Advent happened.

1. **What the world may despise, God values.**
2. The great thing about Small-towns and Small-places is that God likes to use the smallest, the weakest, to demonstrate His great power and authority.
 - a. Some of us here today maybe despising our beginnings, the way we grew up, or the amount of talent and skills we have.
 - b. We often despise our small-beginnings.
 - c. We despise our small-giftings.
 - d. We despise our small-influence.
 - e. **Do not despise what God has called holy.**

3. God chose Bethlehem to be the birthplace of great events.

A. Notice what Micah says:

1. From an insignificant place will come the ruler over Israel.
2. His origin will from the ancient times (or before time).
3. This person will stand in strength that comes from the Lord.
4. He will operate in the majestic name of the Lord his God.
5. He will be the protector and savior of Israel and will bring peace to a troubled land.

B. These bold claims can only be fulfilled in Jesus.

1. And most of these claims are looking forward to a future day when Jesus, in His Second-Advent, will come in grandeur and power.
2. On that day, He will defend against the invasion of His Kingdom.
3. On that day He will stand as shepherd of Israel.
4. On that day, He will be their peace and will deliver from evil.

C. The greatest events ever to take place found their start in the smallness of Bethlehem.

1. At the first Advent, it was not kings and Caesars who met the new-born king, but shepherds brought from the fields.
2. You see, shepherds had always been despised as "little people".
 - a. They were dirty and consistently unclean according to Jewish standards.
 - b. In Jesus' Day **Shepherds were necessary but not desirable.**
3. But who was it that the Angels declared the great news to?

- a. Was it not the outcast, the undesirable, the little-people?
- b. Was it not these shepherds that became the first preachers and heralds of Jesus' advent?

4. Advent is a reminder that there is no such thing as "little-people" and "little-places".

A. For some reason, our culture has adopted elves as a part of the Christmas celebration.

1. Little people who do the biddings of Santa (the Big-Guy) with some magic and whimsy thrown in.
2. Could it be that we have bought into the lie that people like us are nothing more than "little elves"?

B. When we start believing the narrative that God can't use little-o-me, we have bought into the lie.

1. When we confess that God can't use me because I'm too old, too young, too poor, or too insignificant, we devalue the power of God.
2. **I am convinced that God is desiring to use out of the way places to be the recipients of God's presence and power.**

C. What would happen in places like Licking and the surrounding communities if God's people believed that God can and will do great things in our modern-day Bethlehem?

1. I believe the heart of God who desires to pour out His Spirit in the most unlikely places.
2. The same God who called nobodies like Gideon, Ruth, and Peter to do big things is the same God who is calling people in out of the way places like Licking, Success, Salem, and Houston.

Final Idea: Stop diminishing the work God has for you.

A. You do not have to be from somewhere else to be used by God.

1. There are no insignificant places and no insignificant people.

2. That should remind us of the importance of ministering where we are.

3. This weekend, I spoke at a conference designed for missionaries to all of the world.

4. And while each one of our callings were different and unique, not one of this was more significant than the other.

B. During this Advent season, I remind you that Jesus came to save ALL people.

1. He loves ALL people.

2. He desires to save, and heal, and forgive ALL people.

3. There are no Little People.

C. Jesus' Advent in the small-town of Bethlehem reminds us that Jesus came to bring hope, joy, love, and peace to all of the world and He began in the smallest of places.

