

This Is Christmas: Peace – Micah 5:1-5a

This Is Christmas. Literally and the title of the series we're in. Focusing on the things that make Christmas, Christmas. Not gifts, carols, and Hallmark movies; but joy, peace, and hope. And having focused on joy last week, this week is peace. And who doesn't want peace in their life? So let's turn to Micah 5:1-5 and see what God has for us.

Micah is one of the 12 *Minor Prophets* in the Old Testament. So named, because they're shorter than the writings of the *Major Prophets* – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. They're not minor because their *message* is less *important*; just shorter.

And Micah was one of the *earlier Minor Prophets*. A contemporary of Isaiah, he lived and wrote around 700BC. And like most of the prophets, he preached a message of both judgment and peace. Much of which centers on a Shepherd-King. A Savior who would *offer* peace to the world. V1. (Outline)

[1] Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel [the leader] on the cheek. It's a metaphor for an all-out attack. Strike the leader, scatter the sheep.

And the year was 701BC. The northern tribes of Israel had already fallen, and now Assyria was coming for the *southern* tribes; the capital of *Jerusalem*; the *daughter* of troops. So Micah says, "Rally the troops! The siege is here and the attack has begun."

[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah [v2], 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. [3] Therefore he [God] shall give them up [his people] 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. [4] And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD [Yahweh], 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. [5] And he shall be their peace. (ESV)

That's Christmas. Because Micah's talking about Jesus. The one who *fulfilled* this prophecy and ended our wondering. Our wondering as to who it would be.

In other words, Christmas is peace because:

Jesus means the end of wondering. (Mt 2:1-6)

Christmas and peace are synonymous because *Jesus* was born, and he's the one of whom Micah spoke. Ending the wondering once and for all.

➤ It starts with King David. Micah connects the future deliverer of whom he speaks, to King David of the past. That's the reference to *Bethlehem Ephrathah*. *Bethlehem*, referring to the village near *Jerusalem* where King David was *born*; and *Ephrathah* was one of the families there. A family too little and insignificant to really matter *among the clans of Judah*, v2, but the very family from which David *himself* was born. 1 Sam 17:12 – *David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah*. Same family, same place, 300 years earlier.

So in one statement, Micah connects the future deliverer of whom he speaks, the *Messiah*, with King David of old.

And that matters, because King David is the one with whom God made an everlasting covenant, to place one of his offspring on the throne of his kingdom, forever and ever. (2 Sam 7:14) And following that, God's people wondered who it would be. Especially after *Micah's* prophecy; connecting the ruler of peace with David. They wondered.

➤ Until Jesus came 700 years later. Born in the very same town, of the tribe of Judah, and the lineage of David. He fulfilled it. All of it.

And just to make sure we see it, Matthew, in the New Testament, traces the *genealogy* of Jesus back to David; in chapter *one* of his Gospel. Then, in chapter 2, he cites this prophecy as *referring* to him. And I want *you* to see it. So keep your finger in *Micah*, and flip over to Mt 2:1-6.

[1] Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea [the area or region] in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, [2] saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews [ruler]? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ [the Messiah] was to be born. [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: [6] 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" They quoted *Micah 5*.

And Matthew records it, in order to *connect* the prophecy to *Jesus*. Identifying *him* as the one of whom *Micah spoke*, and removing all doubt for all time. All wondering for all people. Including us.

Christmas is synonymous with peace because *Jesus* means the end of wondering. Wondering who's the one and when he would come. Who would save us, and bring us peace.

Second, and back to Micah 5:1, Christmas is peace because:

Jesus means the end of worry. (v1-2)

Muster your troops Micah says in v1, because the enemy is at the gates. You have something to worry about. Your overthrow is at hand.

[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, [too little to be noticed, too little to matter to such attackers; you have *nothing* to worry about. That's the idea. Because] from you [v2] shall come forth for me one who is to be *ruler* in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

➤ Jesus means the end of worry for 2 reasons here:

1. We don't have to defend ourselves.

But you in verse 2, implies that while *Jerusalem* had cause for worry, *Bethlehem* didn't. Not just because they were little and off the radar screen, but because a *ruler* would arise from them. A king.

And not just *any* ruler, but a ruler for *God*. *From you* [God says in v2 to little *Bethlehem*] shall come forth for *me* [for me] one who is to be *ruler* in Israel. Someone with *God's* interests in mind would arise. Someone who would *lead* his people and *oversee* his

people, *for* him. Someone who would *fight* for his people and *defend* them. Not with the power of might, but the power of truth. “One little word shall fell them” as the old hymn goes. (Martin Luther). No worries.

And no worries as to whether this *applies* to us. We *are* the Israel of God; the church. Gal 6:16. God’s ruler has come, and by virtue of our faith in him, we’re a part of God’s *people*. And therefore need not worry about our defense. Against anyone. Any *time*. Because Jesus is Lord, and rules.

➤ Second, Jesus means the end of worry because:

2. We can follow him with confidence.

After all, his *coming forth* [v2b] is *from of old*, from *ancient days*. Meaning he was God’s choice before the foundation of the world, *of old*; and part of his plan from the time it began; *ancient days*. He’s God’s choice and God’s plan. Making him *worthy* of our trust; *worthy* of our confidence.

What’s there to worry about? Don’t worry. About a thing. “Cause every little thing, gonna be alright.” Thank you, Bob Marley. But of all the people in the world who can *truly* sing that, and sing it with confidence, we can; believers. Followers of Jesus. Because Jesus means the *end* of worry. Christmas and always.

Third, Christmas is peace because:

Jesus means the end of wandering. (v3)

Not wondering, but wandering. *Meandering* through life. Roaming. Drifting. V3.

[3] *Therefore* [in light of a future deliverer] *he* [God] *shall give them up* [give his people over to judgment, because of their sinful rebellion; like he did a hundred years later when they were carried off to Babylonian captivity].

He shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers [the remnant God would preserve; those who remained faithful] *shall return to the people of Israel* [reconnect with God and his people].

But not *until the time when she who is in labor has given birth*. A prophecy that must have caused the people of Micah’s day to scratch their living heads. And those in the centuries that followed as well. Causing many of them to wander aimlessly in life with no purpose, no direction, and no future.

➤ Until an angel appeared to *Mary*, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, and she gave *birth*, to a baby. Ushering in a new way of relating to God, reconciling with God, and *returning* to God.

That’s why Christmas is peace. Because Jesus means the end of wandering. No longer “given up” and left to our own devices and sin. No longer waiting for God to *save* us. No longer fragmented and on our own like the Israelites of old. Because *she who [was] in labor, has given birth*.

➤ How about you? Are you wandering in life? Lost and aimless? If so, peace awaits. And I’m going to give you an opportunity to have it before we end. An opportunity to pray with me and be saved. Saved from the consequences of your *sin*, to a life with Jesus. A life of direction and peace, that never ends. Because Jesus means the *end* of wandering.

4th, Christmas is synonymous with peace because:

Jesus means the end of insecurity. (v4)

Not *feelings* of insecurity; like when we’re low on faith and high on fear. Worrying more about what others think of you than what God thinks of you. Or more about the *storms* of life than the God who controls them. I’m not talking about *feeling* insecure.

Nor am I saying that Jesus means the end of *vulnerability* in life. The end of attack or danger. Death or sickness. Hardship or struggle. He doesn’t. In fact, those things often go hand-in-hand with Jesus. Hand-in-hand with following him.

I’m talking about the end of *real* insecurity. *Eternal* insecurity. And so is Micah. I’m talking about being safe and secure from all *alarm*. Safe and secure from all *fear*. Safe and secure from hell. Safe and secure from Satan. Christmas is peace because Jesus means the end of *that* kind of insecurity.

➤ V4. *And he* [this ruler from Bethlehem] *shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD*. That’s security. Being shepherded by someone; led and protected. With the strength of God Almighty no less.

And not passively, but *actively*. *He shall stand and shepherd his flock* it says. Far from sitting *down* on the job, **he’s active**. Jesus is active in his shepherding.

When Becky and I were in Romania a few years ago, we saw flocks of sheep from time to time. And on one occasion, as we were in a car going down the highway, I looked over and saw a guy sit up right in the middle of a flock. Out of nowhere. All I saw was sheep, and then this guy sitting up. And for the next 20 seconds or so, while he was still in view, that’s where he stayed. Sitting down.

Which is the exact *opposite* of Jesus. He stands. He’s *active* on our behalf. He’s involved in our lives. Interceding, moving, securing.

Second, Jesus means the end of insecurity because **he’s strong**. Shepherding us *in the strength of the LORD*. Providing and protecting us with the same power that created and upholds the universe. Like no other does or can. He’s strong.

Third, **he’s commanding**. Shepherding us *in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God*. Commanding respect and obedience and honor because he’s acting on *God’s* behalf. Coming in *his* majestic name. With his backing; his glory. He’s commanding.

And last, Jesus means the end of insecurity because **he’s amazing**. Last part of v4. *And they* [his flock] *shall dwell secure* [live safe, assured], *for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth*. Jesus means the end of insecurity, because he’s great. Amazing. Awesome. Extraordinary. And not just to a group of people in Israel, but the world; *the ends of the earth*.

And that spells security. Because there’s no place *beyond* his reach. No realm beyond his oversight. No situation beyond his control. He’s got the *whole* world in his hands. Christmas is peace because Jesus – active, strong, commanding, and amazing – means the end of insecurity.

And last, Christmas is peace because:

Jesus is our peace. (v5a)

Before Micah returns to the near-term future in the *second* part of v5, Micah ends his prophecy with this: *And he shall be their peace. Their*, referring to his people. Those who put their faith and trust in him. Those who love him and live for him. He becomes their actual *peace*. Their *shalom*. That's the word. Meaning perfect rest; perfect tranquility. Free of turmoil and free of strife.

At least on the inside. We may face strife on the outside, but inside we have Jesus; peace personified; peace present. Turmoil may surround us, but it need not affect us. *Fear* may abound, but it need not rule us. Not those for whom *Jesus* is their peace.

We can rise *above* the fray. And should. We can rest *secure*. And should. Because by faith in Jesus, the future tense for Micah is present tense for us. It's no longer *he shall be our peace* in v5, but *he is our peace*.

➤ And *apart* from him, apart from *faith* in him and *following* him, you *have* no peace. Not in your heart. Not for good. I don't care how good your life is. How secure your job. How big your bank account. Apart from Jesus, your soul will be in constant turmoil. If it's not one thing, it's another. Sometimes better and sometimes worse, but always there. Always burning.

And your eternity will be even worse. Full of weeping and gnashing of teeth the Bible says. Where the smoke of your torment goes up forever and ever. The exact *opposite* of peace.

➤ Don't go there. And don't miss out; here. Receive Jesus into your life, and experience the peace of Christmas. (**Summary**) Turn your *life* over to him, and dwell secure. *Follow* him, and stop wandering. *Rest* in him, and stop worrying

Prayer of salvation. If I've been speaking to you, pray with me right now. "Lord Jesus, I need you. I'm tired of wandering, and I'm tired of worrying. Tired of unrest, and tired of insecurity. I know I'm a sinner, and need you to save me. So please forgive me of my sin, and come into my life. Be my Lord and Savior. I want to live for you from now on.

➤ As we continue in prayer, I'd love to know if you just prayed with me. Just to encourage you and pray for you. If you're here in person, would you raise your hand and wait for me to acknowledge you? And if you're watching online, would you respond on your screen, or text the word "**Saved**". I just want to rejoice with you and pray for you. Is there anyone?

Prayer – Lord, thank you drawing us to yourself, and giving us peace. Bless each and every person who prayed to receive you, with the peace of Christmas. The peace of your presence. And spur them on to know you and love you, more and more. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.