

“From the Smallest?”—Micah 5:2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “From the Smallest?”, is Micah 5:2 → *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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Bigger is always better!” It seems that this phrase is the mantra of many people in the world. It can undergird a crass discontentment as people search for a bigger paying job, a bigger house and even a bigger church. It assumes that something done on a small scale is not as “successful” as something done on a larger scale. In fact, many look up to and even idolize those who have “made it big” to the point of thinking if one is famous or rich what s/he says must be important and influential. This is why companies will pay “big bucks” in order to have someone famous advertise their product . . . or their candidate . . . or their charity . . . and so forth.

The desire of people to be a part of something bigger than themselves is fairly normal since many people feel their impact upon the

world is rather insignificant. At best they may be able to see that they're making some kind of impact in their small world around them but even that is challenged many times by feelings of failure, the judgments and opinions expressed by others around them as well as feelings of insecurity. Believing the lie that "bigger is better" can disable one from striving to function properly as a child of God through whom He makes His impact in your life where you are! It has even given rise to the counter adage: "Bloom where you are planted."

The first thought expressed in our text is that of Bethlehem's insignificance, especially as the village from which the Messiah should come to make Yahweh's significant impact in the lives of His people . . . or shall we say, **the whole world!** It describes Bethlehem as *too little to be among the clans of Judah*. What does that mean?

Israel was split up into clans of one thousand families with a leader over each clan. Bethlehem was so small that it couldn't even form a clan. In fact, Bethlehem was so small it was not even listed among the cities of Judah in some lists in the Scriptures. Thus, no one would have expected Yahweh to bring His Savior out of a small, insignificant village like Bethlehem unless they would have known and taken the words of this prophecy of Micah to heart.

However, this was true to God's form when performing His significant work of deliverance in the lives of His people. Over and over again He

used what appeared in the eyes of people to be the smallest and/or insignificant in order to bring about the power of His salvation. For instance, when the Midianites were oppressing His people God raised up a guy by the name of Gideon to go . . . *and save Israel from the hand of Midian*. Gideon's first reaction was: *Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my **clan is the weakest** in Manasseh, and **I am the least** in my father's house* (cf. Judges 6:14-15). Yet, Gideon went for Yahweh but only after God had whittled down his army from 22,000 to 300 men (cf. Judges 7:1-8). Yahweh stated that His purpose for doing so was to make sure they knew that it was God Who was working His deliverance through them and not their own efforts. It was based on **His power**, not theirs.

Another example: When the prophet Samuel was commanded to anoint a king for Israel he was sent to the house of a man named Saul. When he revealed the purpose of his journey to Saul it didn't seem to make sense to him. According to 1 Samuel 9:21 *Saul answered, "Am I not a Benjamite, **from the least of the tribes of Israel?** And is not **my clan the humblest** (i.e. most insignificant) of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?"*

When it came time to pick King Saul's successor, Samuel was sent to the home of Jesse, King David's dad. As Jesse's sons were brought

before Samuel to determine which one was to be Yahweh's anointed, *he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him"* (cf. 1 Samuel 16:6). Apparently Eliab looked like what Samuel thought would make a good king. After telling Samuel not to *look on his appearance or on the height of his stature*, he ended up anointing the youngest kid, David (cf. 1 Samuel 16:6-13). Who woulda thought? Certainly not David, his dad and especially not his brothers!

Thus, Bethlehem can be kind of an object lesson of the way that God works His plan in our lives, displaying His power through the insignificant, the weakest and in the midst of inabilities. Even when the LORD brought about the fulfillment of this prophecy of our text with the birth of Jesus, the wise men went looking for the birth of *the King of the Jews* in Jerusalem. Makes sense, as the most logical place for a king to be born would be in the palace in the capital city. As they pressed King Herod, he had his *chief priests and scribes* look into the Scriptures to find out where it was prophesied that *the Christ was to be born*. They told him about this prophecy of our text. (cf. Matthew 2:1-5) However, quoting from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, it says that Bethlehem is **not** too small **in God's eyes** in light of delivering His Savior to people. Matthew 2:6 says: *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.*

Despite Bethlehem's smallness the prophesied Messiah did come out of it as the *ruler in Israel*. The phrase *from you shall come forth* refers to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Interestingly, the Jews who were trying to believe Jesus' claims to be the Messiah during His earthly ministry even recognized this prophecy as validation of the coming of the Christ. Their consideration is recorded in John 7:42 → *Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was? Sure enough! The fulfillment was standing right in front of them! However, not everyone whom Jesus encountered necessarily knew where He was born or from which tribe of Israel He hailed. This is also why the genealogies of Scripture are so important because they also reveal Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy!*

So what's your perspective? Do you find yourself believing that "bigger is better" because of feelings of insignificance? Do you find yourself focusing on your own insecurities, weaknesses, failures and inabilities in life? If we're all honest with ourselves we know our failures and weaknesses, especially when it comes to God's Law and our disobedience to Him (i.e. sin). When things do not seem to be working the way you think they should work do you belittle God's working in your life by thinking something bigger is better? These are satan and your old sinful nature's way of disabling you so you fail to see God's power at

work through frail, weak, broken sinners such as you and me. God says in 1 Corinthians 1:28-29 that He chooses *what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.* In other words, God wants to use you in the midst of all your weaknesses, inabilities and even insecurities so that you will know that **it is He Who brings about your salvation, not you!**

Today God still wants to use the “smallest” and “weakest” to do great things for Himself as He empowers you with His Holy Spirit. However, many people react to serving the LORD with excuses which reflect a focus on their own weaknesses, inabilities or powers. Instead of looking to the promises of God fulfilled in the Scriptures they look at things **from our own perspectives** and find themselves actually denying the power of God to work through them. Remember: All God has to work with is frail, weak, broken sinners such as you and me, who are the beneficiaries of His gracious forgiveness by faith in the atoning work of this Babe of Bethlehem.

Yet, it is through such frail, weak, broken sinners, who experience the fulfillment of His prophecies by trusting in Jesus as their Savior, that He accomplishes His work. This happens as we come to Him in repentance, confess our sins of self-centeredness and trust His Holy Spirit to work

through our small, menial service to bring His grace and salvation in Christ Jesus to bear on our daily vocations and relationships in life. Just as God used Bethlehem, even though it was considered very small and insignificant in the eyes of many, He will also use you **and is using you right now**, as you trust in the guidance of His Holy Spirit to work His Will through you! Amen.

We have this treasure (i.e. the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ)
in jars of clay (i.e. frail, sinful, weak forgiven humans that we are),
to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

(2 Corinthians 4:7)

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