

Great Things For Little Ones

Bible Reading:

Micah 5: 2-5a

Luke 1: 39-55

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WHO IS HE?

It was a stone manger,
 That place where he lay;
Not a fine oaken cradle,
 But a box filled with hay.
His mother sang to him
 Suckling her breast,
While shepherds came kneeling
 At angels behest.

Is this the Messiah?
 Not a king, but a child?
Just like our children
 In a world just as wild.
Does God really want us
 To follow this boy?
Can he be the Saviour
 Who has not one toy?

The hopes of the world,
 Invested in pain,
Will not bring another;
 There's nothing to gain
In pining and searching,
 In warring and strife;
For God's gift of love
 Came in that helpless life.

Rev. John Shearman
Christmas 2003

And His coming we celebrate with our children this morning; we celebrate it as we share in the wonder of Holy Baptism.

We prepare, on this last Sunday of Advent, to celebrate the birth of the Messiah

*Not a king, but a child
Just like our children
In a world just as wild.*

The Messiah whose coming is promised by the prophet Micah. Micah lived and served in the same time as the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah hung around the royal court. A man of wealth and means.

But Micah - he came from a small town in the countryside outside Jerusalem. He was just an ordinary bloke, and spoke from the viewpoint of the common rural people.

The time in which he lived, about 725BC, was a difficult time. Courts were corrupt. Politics were in turmoil. Economic conditions were rough. It often wasn't safe to walk down the road alone. Especially in those little, out of the way and sometimes forgotten places like Micah's town.

This little prophet, from a bumped-around and written off community, gives a huge promise -
But you, O Bethlehem... who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel....He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord.... and they shall live secure... and he shall be the one of peace.

Big comfort for little people.

People that everyone else would write off, or hurry past in order to get to the more important crowd;
to the powerful ones
to the ones who make the decisions and cause things to happen.

Big comfort for little people.

That's what the little person, Mary, celebrates.

A young teen, inexperienced as a mom, is promised that the Saviour of the world will be born through her.
She will be- in some real and mysterious way, *theotokos*, mother of God.

We encounter her as she travels to her relative Elizabeth for some security and affirmation.

Elizabeth's baby leaped in her womb, we're told.

A response, as Don Postema says, to the leap of the Divine One into humanity - Immanuel, God with us.

Immanuel - Jesus:

The same one who gathered children around him, children that adults wrote off as undeserving of Jesus' time and attention,

He gathered them close and blessed them -

"Let the children come to me, and don't get in their way, because the kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones like these."

Jesus - who found time

- to speak words of forgiveness and hope to a beaten, ashamed woman caught in adultery
- asked to be the guest of a tax collector that everyone despised
- reached out to touch lepers that others turned and ran away from
- spoke a word of healing to a cripple that others were quick to walk around

Jesus -

friend of little people

literally little people - like Kyra and Willem

and those that seem, by all the values of society, to matter little.

And Mary -

- a girl that many people would overlook as having the qualifications to even be a babysitter, let alone mother -
- Mary sings with joy about His coming.

A song of joy, that is,

at the same time

a song that turns world values on their head.

My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.....

Why?

....for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of His servant....

....He has scattered the proud...

....He has brought down the powerful....

....and lifted up the lowly;

He has filled the hungry with good things...

Notice the tense in which this song of Mary is written.

Does she speak about something that God **will** do?

How is it written?

Past tense!

In the eternal and sovereign power and plan of God it is as good as done!

Completed fact.

It's big comfort for little people.

Those that are determined to make a name for themselves, a career for themselves, a future for themselves

to pull themselves along – or up

are welcome to try.

But they will be swimming, so to speak, upstream;

swimming against the powerful current of God's divine will and plan.

*He **HAS** scattered the proud*

*He **HAS** brought down the powerful*

*He **HAS** lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry.*

It is as good as done in God's eternal scheme of things.

All of which -

The message from the little prophet out of the backwoods town

The song from the little nobody girl.....

All of which sends two messages to you and me.

First of all -

It speaks loudly and clearly to those of us who feel as though life is rushing right past us. We wonder about whether our life really matters; if anyone notices.....

or cares.

We wonder about whether we count for anything.

And the message is that the great King of the Universe looks down precisely towards people like you and me.

And He whispers, "*You are my treasure. I delight in you. My friend. My child. I love you. I will never leave you alone - not for a minute. You are worth more to me than anything.*"

When we feel as if the circumstances standing in front of us, or perhaps swirling around us at the end of another year -

- that these circumstances are battling us into the ground

we are invited to bring our hesitations, our tears, our frustration, our worry

- and share it, openly, fully

with One in heaven who whispers,

*"I know. I really **DO** know - because I've been there.*

And I am with you."

And, when we look at the sin in our lives, sin that we all carry,

and wonder how there can be any eternal hope

we see, not too far from Bethlehem's stall,

a hill

where one day a cross would be erected

and the lowest of deaths, a cursed death, suffered by

the child of Christmas.

Filling those who are hungry with the gift of salvation
Raising those weighed down by moral garbage and shame
- raising them with a word of full forgiveness.

This is the Child of Bethlehem.

Jeremy & Nadia, Ian & Brenda -
- raise your newly baptised children to follow Him.

Secondly -

The message from these little people is an encouragement, even a challenge to examine the direction of our lives.

We hear, and see, in Christmas.....
..... oh, how clearly we hear and see it!!!
How God pays attention to the little people.
His passion is for the dispossessed, the poor, the lonely, the weak.

His holy, eternal power is determined to work Creation History towards the day when they will be restored.
That is His will.
That is where He's moving history.

So.....

in light of that -
Where is my life pointed?

Am I in alignment with the passion and will of God?
Am I giving significant energy to what really matters to God?
Providing a hand up, an ear that listens, and a voice that speaks as advocate for the little people of our city and world?
Or am I all consumed with the push to cushion my own life?

Honestly - what is it?
That's the big question for me.

Because, let me tell you - I don't want to be running in the opposite direction of God. I don't want to be found - at the end of my time on earth - having spent a lot of energy swimming against His divine current.
How ultimately futile that would be.

Fellow pilgrims in faith -

Christmas is a time of hope, of joy, of beginnings, of peace found.
Not just in dreams of a white Christmas
Or in momentary fits of charity
But in the real person of Christ - God become human.
Our Saviour.
Our Friend.
Our Life.

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That place where he lay;
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But a box filled with hay.
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