

Quinquagesima

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] The back story to our Old Testament reading this morning is that the prophet Micah was prophesying about the impending doom upon Israel from the hand of the Assyrians.

! This prophet also foretold of Judah's eventual fall to the mighty Babylonians. Needless to say, these words from this prophet were not the most inspiring to his listeners.

The book begins with the following words from Micah chapter 1. The prophet Micah is proclaiming dark days ahead for Israel and Judah because of their unfaithfulness, because of their idolatry and unbelief.

But even in the bleakest of times, we heard words of hope and comfort this morning. In our reading this morning from Micah chapters 4 and 5, we heard how the weapons of war, the spears, would be turned into tools, pruning hooks, for the purpose of cultivating life rather than inflicting death.

We heard how the least of the tribes of Judah from the region of Bethlehem would bring forth the Holy One, the Messiah, who, according to Micah, is from of old, from everlasting.

[2 : 01] And we read in Micah chapter 5 and we read in Micah chapter 5 verse 4. And he, that is the Messiah, shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord.

In the majesty of the name of the Lord is God and they shall abide. For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. In the bleakest of times, Micah, who prophesied captivity and exile for the people of God, also spoke of the one who would sit upon David's throne and rule forever and ever.

And during this Christmas tide, this is what we celebrate. The eternal God of heaven has come to the humble place of Bethlehem, born in the midst of much fear and confusion.

Jesus came to set his people free. Jesus came to give life. He came to gather people from all nations in order to shepherd and to lead them to eternal life in his eternal kingdom.

But let's be honest. It's hard for us oftentimes to get our heads around this. We hear the promise of peace and how swords will give way to garden tools.

[3 : 31] But what we witness are wars and rumors of war. We see how greed motivates and how selfishness is rewarded.

And all of this makes us feel a bit jaded and tired. Tired of the platitudes regarding this idea of peace on earth.

When what we see is destruction and bloodshed. Yes, we sing of Christ the newborn king. But what we witness is further division, skepticism, and uncertainty.

But what if I told you that such thoughts are not necessarily bad? What if these thoughts are exactly what we should be feeling and experiencing? You see, Jesus did not come to this earth to give us some pie-in-the-sky, milquetoast spirituality.

He came in the midst of hurt and pain and alienation and exile and, yes, even death. And the promise is not that our problems will disappear with Jesus.

[4 : 42] As a matter of fact, Jesus promises that following him will create further problems. You see, our Lord came to Bethlehem being born as a child in order to begin a journey to Jerusalem.

And that journey to Jerusalem would culminate in a death sentence. And the cross would be the throne where the creator and king would crush the head of Satan.

And the earth would be the resting place of our God for three days. Until he proclaimed his victory over death and the grave. As our Lord would then burst forth from that empty tomb.

Trampling down death once and for all. And this God who experienced humiliation, rejection, and even death has come to bring life.

And our Lord calls us to make this journey with him. He calls us to make this journey that he made with one promise in mind.

[5 : 54] That one day all hurt, pain, and death will be gone. God has come bringing us life.

God has come to destroy death. God has come to give us hope in the midst of some rather bleak times. God has come to believe in the midst of the world.

And God calls us to trust in him despite the circumstances surrounding us. We are not to trust in earthly powers or princes.

We are not to trust in ourselves. Sorry, Disney. We are to trust in God. We are to believe what the prophet Micah told us knowing that the prophecy that he foretold has come true.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And he came to set us free. From sin. From death. From the devil.

The baby born in Bethlehem is our shepherd.

[7 : 06] Who leads and guides us to our eternal rest. And even though this world wages war and spews forth lies.

Our Lord gives us life. And the promise that sin, suffering, and death will never separate us from the love that we share in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Who is our Savior and our King. And the comforting words of hope, once again from the prophet Micah. We will walk in the name of the Lord, our God, forever and ever.

And friends, this is our hope and comforts. And this is what we celebrate this Christmas time.

Thanks be to God. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Thank you.