

## SECOND MIDWEEK ADVENT SERMON

### Micah 5:2-4

*One Who Is to Be Ruler in Israel, Whose Origin Is from of Old, from Ancient Days*

Did you hear the collision? Two huge and unfathomable realities just crashed into one divine and revealed Truth. Here God becomes Man and sin meets the Savior. Here the prophet confesses his faith with us according to the Nicene Creed: *“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father”* who *“for us and for our salvation, came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human.”*

In Hebrew, the word root **ac'y** is used twice here: *“out of [Bethlehem] will come forth”* and *“whose comings forth are from of old.”* This Ruler who is coming forth from Israel, that is, who will be born as a Child in Bethlehem, will also have come forth from of old. In other words, He will be true Man, born of the Virgin Mary in a real geographical place at a real historical time, and true God, eternally begotten of the Father.

I must admit that as I prepared to write this devotion, I was lost. I kept reading the text, but, apparently, I never really read it. Then I found a sermon Luther wrote on this text and felt like beating myself over the head. How blind I had been! I remembered Jesus words to the Pharisees: *“These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”* I had been reading the text, and I knew that the One prophesied was Jesus, but I did not see Jesus here as He appears: God made Man *for us and for our salvation*.

Last week we talked about Israel and how in New Testament times the Holy Christian Church has become the New Israel. The spiritual promises made to Israel in the Old Testament now apply to Christ’s Church, which is composed of all believers. In our lesson today, the prophet writes about this coming Ruler over Israel: *“He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will live securely, for then His greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.”*

This promise is for and about us, because we are God’s New Testament Israel. We are His people, made such by Holy Baptism. Christ has come into His kingdom, into your hearts by faith, and now rules it as its Shepherd, leading souls to safety. As many of you learned in catechism class, the kingdom of God is His rule in our hearts by faith now and His rule in heaven forever; and our Advent King is coming again soon to make these kingdoms one.

Notice the interesting order in which the prophet places the comings forth of our Advent King. He first mentions His human origins, being born in

Bethlehem, and then proceeds to His divine origins, being begotten of the Father from eternity. The prophet does not write carelessly here, but is divinely and purposefully guided by the Holy Spirit, who inspired every prophet and apostle who recorded His thoughts. The comings forth of our Lord Jesus Christ are included in this order, because this is how we are to approach Him.

St. Matthew quotes this prophecy in his Gospel, chapter 2. When Herod asked where the Christ-child would be born, his scholars cited this passage of Scripture and told him Bethlehem. Micah's prophecy took flesh in the infant the Magi adored. This infant to whom they gave gifts was the greatest Gift of all, God from God made Man for man. Like the Magi, we too find and worship God only by finding and worshipping this Child. For this reason, the prophet records Christ's human birth first. Luther writes:

If you want to know this Child aright, go first to Bethlehem, that is, learn that this Child is born of the Virgin Mary, true man, flesh, blood, and bone like yours and mine, yet without sin, with a mission to fulfill and discharge in this world, namely, as Micah says, to be a Ruler who would redeem His people from sin and eternal death. Then, after these things are well learned and the Child is found, seen, and touched in the manger, the light will dawn, too, that this son of Mary is also the Son of God, born of God before time and from everlasting. He has two goings forth or births, and yet is only one person. Consequently, when you lay hold of this Man, Christ, you have laid hold of God. (*Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 5, 213,4)

I missed Christ here at first, because I started in the wrong place. I simply sought the Ruler, coming forth from of old, and missed the Child, born in Bethlehem. I had the order wrong. Don't do the same today. Find Christ here in the manger, wrapped in Micah's prophecy. Hold Him, never letting go. Know that as you hold this little Child, unimpressive though He appears, you hold your very God, begotten from all eternity, now weak and helpless, that He might make you strong. Here is your Ruler, coming forth from Bethlehem, coming forth from of old, all for you and your eternal safety, Man because He must die for men, God because only God's death could pay for the sins of the world. In the quietness of this moment, hear that monumental collision, as God becomes Man and sin meets the Savior. Come, Lord Jesus, come! Amen.