

### 3 Prophecies of the Birth of Jesus: Micah 5:1-5

Micah 5:1-5

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 12, 2021

I just want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to the book of Micah. That's the book we're in today. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and then you find Micah. And as you're doing that, I want to shift gears for a moment and tell you that we're starting a new series today called Three Prophecies for the Birth of Jesus in honour of the Christmas season. We're doing this in light of the holidays being here, because as most of you know, we've been in the book of Ecclesiastes for several months now. And we're going to get back to it at the first of the year. But for now, we want to take a break in order to talk about Jesus and how He came into the world. And in order to do that, I just want to read our passage for today. It's in Micah chapter five. And we're going to read the first couple verses of this.

Micah chapter five, starting in verse one, it says,

“Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah. From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has born a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, and in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. This One will be our peace.

We'll stop the reading there. Just by reading that you can tell that this is a very unfamiliar passage for most of us; the context sounds kind of strange. But just to say a few words about it, the book of Micah falls into a section of the Old Testament known as the Minor Prophets. They're called minor, not because they're unimportant, but because they're small. There are the major prophets that talk about God's judgment coming on Israel in a lot of words and there are the Minor Prophets that do it in a few words, because they tell us how God is about to punish His people by sending them into exile, which is why they sound so harsh when you read them. If you've ever read these books before, you know it's a lot about judgment, judgment, judgment and wrath, wrath, wrath. But there's more than that as well. Because if you look in Micah chapter seven, verse 18, just to give you some perspective, it tells you this, it says, “Who is a God like You? Who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love.” I wanted to read that to you because of the phrase, “Who is a God like You?” literally translates into the word *Miko*. That's where his name comes from. And it means Who is a God? Who does this for his people? Where can you find a Lord who pardons iniquity and passes over rebellion? Nowhere, He's only one of a kind. Because God could have just judged Israel after they sinned one time, right? He could have punished them right away. But He didn't. They failed Him over and over again, they broke His law repeatedly. But He showed them grace and kindness and mercy. In fact, He sent them prophet after prophet after prophet and gave them warning after warning after warning over a course of 400 years. Now, if you think about that, that's a patient God and for centuries of Prophets, there's 18 of them in the Old Testament, but there's far more that we don't know anything about. Because the idea was that God in His mercy was saying if they don't pay attention to this guy, maybe they'll pay attention to this guy. And if they don't pay attention to that one, then maybe they'll pay attention to the

next one. And it was just mercy after mercy because he's that kind of God. And the book of Micah falls somewhere in the midst of all that. Bible scholars say he was probably on the front end of it. He's a contemporary with Isaiah. And his message is this: the kings of Israel had failed. That was the problem here. The leaders of the people had turned their back on them, because in chapter two, they're taking the people's fields and stealing them. They're throwing a man out of his house and home. In chapter three, they're practicing witchcraft and sorcery and sacrificing their sons in the fire. They were doing the worst type of idolatry imaginable. In chapter four, they're overlooking the blind and lame and those who were afflicted. In chapter six, it says they're using deceitful scales in the marketplace. They're just some rotten people that are leading the country. They're taking it down the tubes. And so as a result, here in chapter five, Micah tells us of a leader who will one day come to fix all of that. And in order to do that, this is what He'll do. If you look in verse four of chapter five, it says that He will arise and shepherd His flock.

I'm going to say more about this in just a moment, but the Hebrew word for Shepherd here is the word *ra ah* which means to shepherd or take care of something. It literally means to feed it or look after its needs. This is the problem of Israel's leaders. They weren't doing that. They weren't shepherds, they were butchers, hurting the people, and Micah says God is going to send someone who is going to be different. Because if you notice in verse five, it says He will be our peace, and that means He's going to remove violence from the land. He's going to bring in a time where the lion will sleep with the lamb and they'll beat their swords into ploughshares.

Verse three says He will help the remainder of the people to return to each other. And that means he's going to bring unity to the nation. Verse four says He will treat them as His brethren, which means He's not going to look down on them anymore. He's going to be humble, but the point is that He's going to do something that Israel had never seen before. He will bring in a time of great awakening, and when you put all this together, you guys know there's only one person that can fulfill all of this and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, right? There's only one man that this could refer to. And that's Him. Micah says he'll be born from Bethlehem, He will come from the tribe of Judah, and His goings forth will be from eternity and long ago. I mean, that sounds familiar to you, because we sing about that at Christmas time, because this is all a reference to Christ. Micah wrote about this 1000s of years ago in the Old Testament to say, this is the one who will save Israel from our sins, it'll be none other than the Son of God Himself. And the way Micah says this is touching, you really have to see this. Because if you remember, God is mad at Israel right now. He is angry with His people, because they just keep sinning, keep breaking his laws, dragging His name through the mud, tearing up His commandments. So He confronts them over it and tells them to stop. But at the same time, He also says, "I know you can't do that on your own. You're not strong enough. So I'm sending someone to help you." Isn't that a good God and a gracious Lord?

And this is something we don't talk about a lot today. But scholars have estimated that about 1/4 of all books in the Bible are on prophecy. And about one out of every five verses were prophetic at the time they were written, some of those prophecies have been fulfilled since then, but at the time they were written, about one out of every five verses in the Bible is talking about the future. And almost all of them point back to one thing, and that is Jesus. He's the One God sent to rescue His people. The Bible says that over and over again. In fact, when you count it all up and put it put the information all together, there are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah. They're called the Messianic prophecies. And they cover everything from the timing of his birth to the manner of his death, and the way he would return to the earth. They even go into detail about random things like His appearance, because they said He had no stately form or majesty, so that He looked like everyone else. If you saw the Messiah in a photograph, He would not be the tallest guy with blond hair and blue eyes; you

wouldn't know who he was. But it does all that for one reason, and that was to help the Jews. All that information was provided to encourage them and tell them that God had not given up on them. He had every reason to and He should have given up on them; you and I would have given up on them. But He doesn't do that, because He's that kind of type of God. They understood this, by the way. I mean, Israel knew they had a Messiah coming because things were so bad. In fact, the rabbis tell us that in the first century alone, 10 false messiahs appeared in Israel, one right after the other like a like a gong show. So in order to help them with that, the Lord gave them prophecies like this one to say that when the Messiah comes in Israel, this is what He will look like: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you, One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." Micah says you don't have to worry about the false messiah because when the real one gets here, He's going to come from this place in this tribe in this part of Israel. So you have no excuse if you miss it.

One commentator said this, he said, "Everyone could tell when the Messiah appeared in Israel, because God was not trying to hide anything. He was not playing games with his people. All they had to do was take the declarations of Moses and the prophets seriously. And they could see that they tell us plainly about who he was. In fact, the Scriptures tell us that his life would be so unusual that there's no human being on the planet who could match it, he would stick out like a sore thumb. And if you miss that there could be no other explanation for it, your heart was too hard to receive it. You did not see the Messiah because you didn't want to see the Messiah. You didn't care to see the Messiah because your heart was steeped in sin." He's right. I mean, the only reason you could miss this Jesus, the Son of God, is because of your failure, not God's. He made it clear, crystal clear.

I was I was talking to a waitress at a restaurant the other day, who told me that there are many religions in the world. You guys heard that before...so her belief in Islam is just as legitimate as my belief in Christianity. But the fact is, it's not because mine has prophecy and hers doesn't. Mine can tell the future and hers can't do that. I mean, nobody ever prophesied about Muhammad before he was born. I don't say that to be disrespectful. It's just a fact. And nobody ever talked about Buddha and what he would do or the gods of Hinduism, or the religion of Sikhism, but the future was foretold for Jesus Christ and it makes Him totally unique. In the annals of history, it makes Him stand alone.

Several years ago, a mathematician named Peter Stoner was asked what was the probability of one man randomly fulfilling all these prophecies about the Messiah. And he said it was one in 10th to the 17th power. That's one with 17 zeros behind it. So they asked if you could break that down for us. And he said, "Well, if you cover the entire state of Texas, in silver dollars and marked one of them, and asked a blind man to find it, that's what it's like. It's impossible." No man could fulfill all of this by mistake, but Jesus did it, to show you that He was the Messiah. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

So if you're taking notes, in Micah, chapter five, we're going to look at three reasons why Jesus can save you in this passage. That's our sermon for today just talking about this theme of prophecy. But in Micah five, we're going to look at three reasons why Jesus can save you in this prophecy from the Old Testament. We need to talk about salvation from the Old Testament. It's neat to talk about Christ from so long ago. And we're going to do this because it's Christmas time, a time of the year when we celebrate Jesus birth. And we often say Jesus is the reason for the season, right? I mean, without Him, it's just overeating. And we laugh about it. But I mean, I know people that really have a problem with this holiday because of all the commercialization about it, all the secularization. And I understand that, in fact, this holiday bothered the Puritans so much they used to hold a parade against it; they would march out in the streets on Christmas day in order to protest its abuse. But I don't think we need to do

that today because it gives us an excuse to talk about Christ. In fact, I wish we could have 100 Christmas days just for that one reason, so we could draw our attention back to the Savior. And we're going to do that by looking at the Old Testament today.

We've been in the Old Testament for about four or five months as a church going through the book of Ecclesiastes. So now we're going to do it and look back at our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is actually a very personal thing for me. Because one of the things that helped me when I was first saved, was prophecy. Because I remember reading these things and thinking there's no way a man could come up with this. There's no way a human being could do it. There's just no explanation. And I also remember thinking that if I was God, this is what I would do. I would tell people that my son was coming, wouldn't you? I would love to. I would let them know and that's what He did. We're going to talk about that today by looking at three reasons why Jesus can save you in this passage.

The first one is He can save you because He will be born in Bethlehem. The first reason why Jesus can save you, it's the most obvious one of all, because it jumps out at you as you read this, and that is that He will be born in Bethlehem, which means that He will be born in the humblest place imaginable. You really couldn't get much smaller than a little town of Bethlehem. If you look in verse one, it says this, and it says, "Now muster yourself in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be able to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." Now, as you look at this, one thing you notice is Micah is describing a very specific event in the life of Israel, which is the upcoming capture of the king at the hands of the Babylonians. I just told you, the leaders of Israel had failed the people because they were stealing their land and worshipping false gods and just abusing them. So as a result, Micah says the Lord is going to bring judgment upon them. He will send someone to smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. He's going to send someone to capture the judge, to capture the king, which would be devastating to watch because it symbolizes that it was all over. Now once you capture the king and hit him, that means the nation is done. And so to encourage them in the midst of that, Micah gives them another prophecy that's much bigger in scope. Because he says, "As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." In other words, while the ruler of Israel is going to be taken away, this ruler won't because you'll suffer a different fate.

And just to say something about this, when Micah mentioned the word Bethlehem here, he's referring to a village located about six miles south of Jerusalem, with a population of several hundred. At the time, it was a very small place. In fact, it's pretty wild to think about this, but your Savior was born and died six miles apart. When you're in Jerusalem, you stand on top of the temple, you can almost see Bethlehem with your naked eye. It feels like he could hit a golf ball to it. And this is what Micah is referring to when he says you are too little to be among the clans of Judah. That means Bethlehem is almost too little to be noticed. You almost couldn't see it on a map. If you remember, when Herod found out that the Messiah was from there, what did he do? He killed all the male babies in Bethlehem. Why did he do that? Because he thought he'd get away with it. It wasn't that many babies. When Pharaoh killed the male babies in the book of Exodus, that's totally different. That's millions of people living in Egypt. Bethlehem was something else.

And yet in spite of its smallness, it had a very big reputation, because a lot happened there in the Bible. For example, David was from there. Israel's greatest king, they called Bethlehem, the city of David. Ruth and Naomi, David's ancestors were from there. In fact, we just studied the book of Ruth in our Iron Man's Bible study, and we

saw that most of the events took place in that town. It was a Bethlehem story. Jacob's wife, Rachel was buried there. This is the place where the Levite in the book of Judges cut up his concubine. They did that in Bethlehem. But the point Micah is making here is that out of this obscure place is going to come one who's not obscure, he's going to stand out because he will be a ruler. We all like those rags to riches stories where the little guy rises to the top. That's what this is talking about. And the word for ruler here, it means one who has control over everything, or complete power. Micah says that one day God will bring someone like that from Bethlehem, this little Podunk town, for one simple reason, and that is because God loves to use small things; God likes to take things that nobody notices and makes them stand out, so He will get all the glory for what He did with David. When Samuel was looking for a king, he passed David over because he was too small. And now Micah is saying this king is going to be the same way and come from the same place.

If you were looking for a messiah, you probably would look in Jerusalem, right? With all the priests and the temple and all that, or maybe in Rome with the palace and the Caesars and that kind of thing. God put him in Bethlehem, in a manger, to show that those things don't matter to Him. We've had a lot of folks in our church having babies lately. I haven't found one of them that's done it in a barn yet. I keep waiting for that to happen. But it's not going to happen. Because nobody wants to do that. It's a dirty place. That's where Jesus was born. Because God doesn't think about the things that we do. And that means if you want to be saved, this is what you have to be, you have to be small; little in your own eyes. Because that's how Jesus came into the world. One pastor said this, he said, "Big people never get Jesus into them because there's not enough room. One or the other has to go. You can't hold on to your pride and hold on to Him because He's a humble Lord. And you have to be the same way." I mentioned this because you meet a lot of people who come to church nowadays and think they're big/ They think they're important because they show up here and read their Bibles and pray or they walked an aisle and got baptized and learned the confession as a child, so they think that they're better than everybody else. But if you know what Micah is telling us here, he is saying that salvation doesn't work that way. It's not about you being better than anybody, because Jesus didn't come to save the better people. He came to save the little ones. And you can't be a Christian until you get that.

At His birth, the wise men came. They were Gentiles, foreigners, pagans; they weren't Jewish. And the other people that showed up were shepherds, blue collar workers, low class people, because that's how He came to save. He didn't come from Rome, or Jerusalem. He came from Bethlehem. I can't remember if I told you this before, but in one of his books on the cross, Martyn Lloyd Jones, once said that if you think you deserve heaven, take it from me. You're not a Christian. That's a shocking statement and then you let that sink in for a minute." If you think you deserve heaven, take it from me. You're not a Christian, but for any who think they deserve hell. There's hope." Friends, if you if you think you deserve salvation, you can't be saved because Jesus didn't come for you. He only came for those who don't deserve it. He came to call sinners. The Bible says He came to bring liars and adulterers and thieves to Himself. He came to save blasphemers and adulterers and murderers. He didn't come to save those who had it all figured out. And the good news is that if that describes you, then He can help you. But it has to start there. You have to be humble.

I remember talking to a lady several years ago who wanted to be saved, but she was committing adultery. She was living with someone she wasn't married to. So she said, "I guess I have to give that up if I want to be a Christian, right?" And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "Well, I'll do it if he'll forgive me." Well, he will. That's what it's all about. If you will give up your sins, Jesus will take it as far as the east is from the west, but you have to give it up. His birth reminds us of that.

Several years after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the story is told of how the Roman empire built the church on the sight of His birth called the Church of the Nativity. You can still visit it today. If you go to Bethlehem you can walk into the center of the city, and it's right there. Constantine built it in the fourth century in honor of his mother, Halina, who had become a Christian. It was very unusual at the time; you didn't typically see people get saved who were in positions of power. So out of respect for her, he built her a church. And to symbolize this idea of repentance, he installed a door at the main entrance, called the door of humility, that was only four feet high. Now I'm a short guy. So it always strikes me as odd if I have to duck my head and get into a building, but you have to do that there. But he did that in order to demonstrate that this is how you come to God, you do it by bowing. To get into Heaven, you don't stick your chest out, you kneel, because you've come to serve a king.

And that brings us to another reason why Jesus can save you. And that is because He's from eternity. Going with this idea of kingship, He is from eternity. The first one is: He'll be from Bethlehem. He'll come from the smallest place imaginable to remind you that this is who he's come to save. It's worth mentioning that when you read the gospels, one of the most fascinating stories in there is how Herod and his officials knew Jesus would be born from Bethlehem. But when the wise men came, what did they do? They did nothing. Because Herod thought he was too big for it. He thought he didn't need it. And as a result, he was lost. Friends, one lesson you can learn from that today is you don't ever want to think you're too important to come to Jesus. You have to be humble instead.

And it brings us to this reason why Jesus can save you in this passage, and that is because He is from eternity. Which means that He was born in a tiny place like Bethlehem, but He didn't really come from there. He came from heaven itself. And if you look in verse one again, Micah says, "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

I read all of that passage to you again, because I want you to see an important word in here. And that's the word "but" in verse two. Again, Micah is talking about the rulers of Israel and how God will judge them. And he starts off verse two with the word "but" to form a contrast, because he says, whereas these rulers will be judged by God, this new one will not, because his goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. And that's two ways of referring to the same thing here because it means that his goings forth, or his beginnings are from long ago, from long, long, long ago. And they're from the days of eternity, which means you can look back as far as you can and you will see this man there. You can travel back in time, as far as you can possibly think of all the way back to creation all the way back to before creation, and find that there's never been a moment when He has not existed, because this is a reference to God. The one who would come to rule Israel and save them would be none other than the Son of God Himself. Now, I don't know if Micah understood that when he gave this prophecy; he probably didn't. But what he's referring to here is the doctrine of the Trinity, which says that God is one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person being fully distinct each person being fully God, that was taught way back in the Old Testament. If anybody ever tells you that the Trinity is a New Testament concept, that's not true, you see foreshadowings of it in the old. Because in eternity past God, the Father decided to send the Son to the world to save it. In other words, He didn't send an Angel, because that wouldn't be enough. And He didn't give us a messenger or a representative to save us from sin, He sent His own self.

To show us this, if you look in verse three, it says, "Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Now, Micah doesn't specifically mention the virgin birth there, but Isaiah does. And

we're going to see that next week. But the significance here is that Micah says that this person will be born, the one who will come from eternity will enter into time, just like any normal person would. He'll start life as a baby. It's a very mysterious thing and can't quite get your mind around this. Theologians call this the incarnation, or the time when God took on human flesh, the word *carne* means skin or flesh. If you think of God with skin on Him, that's Jesus. It's also called the *Gnosis*, which means the emptying, because it refers to the time when Jesus emptied himself of some of His divine attributes. Because when He became a baby, He could no longer be omnipresent, everywhere at once. And He could no longer be immutable or changeless like He had been for all eternity; babies change. He could no longer be omnipotent in every way, because babies are weak. But the point Micah is making here is that this person did all of this in order to help you. He did all this in order to save you and show you that when God said He saved you, He meant it, because He finished the job. This is why He didn't send you an angel, because angels can't do this. And this is why He didn't give you a Messenger or representative, because that's not enough. That won't cut it, your sin is too great for that. So the only thing he could do was to send His one and only Son. One theologian described it this way, when he said, "You can punch me in the face. And I assure you, nothing bad will happen to you. I might take you off my Christmas card list and ban you from Facebook. But that'll be about it. But if you punch the President of the United States in the face, you're going to jail or the Prime Minister, because the higher the person, the higher the offense, and so that it's much, much worse, to strike a head of state than it is to strike me. And in a similar way, your sins, although you think they're not hurting anybody are offending the God of the universe. And your sins are like slapping Him in the face. And one day, you are going to have to answer for that. One day, every man, woman and child is going to stand face to face with God, and be judged for their sins. So in order to help you deal with that this is what God did. He sent Jesus Christ to be punished in your place. He sent him to bear the full weight of your sin. So you wouldn't have to." This is being taught in the Old Testament, hundreds of years before it even happened.

I tell you this because I counsel people all the time who tell me that they're so afraid of losing their salvation today. They're so concerned that after following Christ for 10, or 20 or 30 years, they're going to die and go to hell. And when they say that, you have to point them back to passages like this. And remind them that you won't do that because your salvation was not determined 10 or 20 or 30 years ago, it was determined in eternity past. God set it in motion before time began and there's no way He's going to lose that now. It's not possible. Talk to other people who have said that; they're not afraid of losing their salvation as much as they're afraid of losing someone else's because they might sin and bring disgrace upon the name of Christ and mess it all up. Every parent in this room struggles with that. God, am I going to blow it for my kids? Well, no, you're not. Because their salvation is not up to them either. It's all in God's hands. He's sovereign over all of it. Which should be a comforting thought this morning. Your Salvation is a done deal.

A survey was done several years ago, in which it was determined that two thirds of the people in North America who believe in God say that He loves them. But they wrestle with that because they're anxious and afraid. They think God is letting bad things happen to them. Micah says that he's not, eternally speaking. God is only working for your good. Listen, friends, if something has been settled in eternity, there's no way for it to be messed up. Now, do you understand that? That makes sense. And if something was established in heaven, there's no reason for it to be changed. Once you get upon this earth. You weren't born and God said, Oh, no, what do I do now? Never happens. And that should be a source of great peace to you. You know, a pastor friend of mine tells a story of a little boy who got in trouble. And he was told that as a punishment, he couldn't eat with the rest of the family, he had to only have bread and water for supper. When he got home, he was amazed to find that his father had taken his bread and water on himself and given the boy his own plate of steak and potatoes. And as a result, the

boy repented because he knew his father loved him. And friends, I tell you that story, because that's what Christ did for you. He took all your sins on Himself, gave you all His reward, in order to show you just that He loves you. And the only thing you can do now is love Him back.

And that brings us to another reason why Jesus can save you in this passage. Just to review these other ones. The first one is that he will be born in Bethlehem. And secondly, He will be from eternity, which means that He came from a place that no one would ever want to leave. He left his home next to the angels to stoop down into this messed up broken world and help. Anybody ever feel like the world is messed up and broken right now? Can I tell you it was broken when Jesus came to and He came to save it. And if He could save the world back then He can do it today.

And that brings us to one more reason why He can save you in this passage. And that is because He will be a shepherd. A third reason why Christ can save you in this passage is one that we've already talked about a little bit. But we need to say a little more because He will be a shepherd, which means that not only will He save you once, but He'll do it over and over again. He'll look out for you repeatedly because that's what a shepherd does. And if you look in verse two, it says, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.' Therefore He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. This one will be our peace."

As you look over that one more time, you can see the context is important. Because Micah says God will give them up until the time when she has born a child. And that means God will give Israel over into the hands of their enemies until the Messiah comes, in until He appears. And at that point, there'll be a great revival in the land. Because then the remainder of his brethren will return to the sons of Israel. That means they'll go back to the faith and get right with God and that sort of thing, which is what would have happened the first time Jesus came if the Jews would have believed in him. That's what would have taken place long ago, but they didn't; they rejected Him. And so other parts of the Bible tell us that Jesus is going to come a second time to fulfill all of this. And we'll talk about that at another time. But verse four tells us the kind of leader He'll be when it says, "He will arise and shepherd His flock." And the word "shepherd" is an interesting word here because it literally means to shepardize because it refers to someone who does everything a shepherd would. If you think about all the different titles for Jesus, you know, the title of king makes sense because He'll be a king and it'll be royalty, and the title of ruler also, it's a good one because He is going to rule His people. But the title of Shepherd is a funny one because shepherds were dirty people to the Jews. They stink because they spent all their time with sheep. They were kind of unclean almost because they were working with animals all day long. And they were poor because the job didn't pay too well. And they were stressed out because it was demanding. He had to watch the sheep 24 hours a day. But nevertheless, it was a very common image in Israel. He saw a lot of shepherds back then. And for this reason, from Bethel to Hebron in the middle part of Israel, there was a plateau about 35 miles long and 15 miles wide, that was barren of any good soil, couldn't grow crops there. So what the Jews would do is they would grow sheep. They used it for raising animals. Which is why when you open up the Old Testament, you see that Abraham was a shepherd. Remember that? He washed over his flocks, and so is Isaac and Jacob and men like Moses and David and Amos. In fact, it was such a common job that we forget what it entailed. Because there were no walls on this plateau to keep the sheep from wandering off. There were no natural defenses, so it was

very dangerous. There's also very little grass there, so they had to keep moving. And it was so bad that there was no place to really build a sheep pen. So what the shepherds would often do at night is they would put the sheep into a cave in the side of a hill and lie down in the doorway themselves. As a way of saying that, if you want to get to the animals, you have to go through me first, you'll do it over my dead body. And Micah uses this image here to say, This is what Jesus would do for you: He will lie down at the gate of the sheep pen. He will tell Israel's enemies that if you want to get to them, you're going to do it over my dead body. Because this was a personal thing for Him. That's the idea of the word Shepherd. You can be a king over someone from a distance, you don't have to really know them. And you can rule them from far away too, right? But you can't shepherd them like that; it has to be up close and personal. And that's what this word means. At this time in Israel, shepherds didn't have a lot of sheep. The flocks were small, because this was the time before corporate farming. So they knew them all by name. And they knew when they were sick, and they knew when they were discouraged. And they knew when the sheep were having a good or a bad day. And the Bible says Jesus will have that same relationship with you. And this one who came from eternity past, born in Bethlehem wants to know you. That's why He was born in the first place. I don't know about you guys, but there are days when I don't want to know myself, right? There are times when I don't want to be around myself, I sin and I'm grumpy and those types of things. But Jesus does. That was the whole point of His relationship with us.

Hebrews four says it like this: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need." The author of Hebrews says, how can we receive mercy? Because we have someone who cares about us. How do you get grace? Because of Jesus, because He was tempted just like you were because He came to be one of you, just like a shepherd would.

I mean, this is another thing that separates Christianity from all the other religions in the world. I just told you prophecy does that. And it does, but so does this because Allah might have done some wonderful things for the Muslims, but he never came down and died for them. Never took it that far. And Buddha might have done some great things for the Buddhists and the Hindu gods might have done wonderful things for them. But they never left heaven for them. They never came down. Jesus did that for us to show us that this is something different from everything else in history. This means there is nothing and I mean nothing that should ever keep you apart from him. There is no sin or weakness or temptation. There's no struggle or issue or longing. There's no habit or craving or addiction that should ever push you away, because he's made up for it all. You couldn't get there. So he came here. You couldn't reach up so he reached down. Which is what salvation is all about. I mean, the Jews spent 1000s of years trying to reach their way up to God, didn't they? In fact, by the time you get into the Gospels, they're adding law upon law upon law to what's already there is if it wasn't hard enough. They're putting burdens on people's backs. They're swallowing a camel and straining out a gnat. Jesus says it's all so much more simple than that. You just need to put trust in Me. Don't worry about following or keeping all of those laws. You need to put your life in My hands. John 10 Verse 27, the Lord said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow Me." And that means that here's what you have to do to be a sheep, you don't clean yourself up first, you don't go out and take a bath, you need to do one thing, and that's follow. You need to do one thing to be saved. And that's trust in Jesus Christ. In John 10, He said, "I am the door. And if anyone wants to be saved, let him enter through Me." And that means that this is what you have to do as well. You have to walk through the door. You don't have to make your own door. You don't have to look forward and find it and build one. The door is right there in front of your face, you just have to go through. I don't know about you guys, but when I came into the building today, I didn't say, "I don't like this door, I'm going to go make another one." That analogy kind of broke down this

morning, because we have problems over there. It made sense on Tuesday when I wrote this out. I didn't say well, this door is not pretty enough or fancy enough. I didn't say well, it's not decorated the way I want. No, that's dumb. It's a door, walk through it. The same way with salvation. Jesus is standing in front of you and is ready and willing to receive you. You just need to take the step and believe. I mean, this should be easy to do. After all, we said this morning. It's not hard because the Bible has given you one reason after another to come to them. It's given you prophecy after prophecy; 300 of them in the Old Testament. You just need to receive it.

In my studies this week I came across the story of the time Martin Luther was wrestling with the devil. And he thought he heard the devil say to him, "Do you feel forgiven Dr. Luther?" And Luther said, "No, I don't." So the devil asked him, "Well, then how do you know you're saved?" And Martin Luther said, "Because the Bible doesn't tell me to believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will feel saved. It said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Because I'm saved, whether I feel like it or not." And friends, I tell you that story, because that's all you have to do to receive all this. You don't have to feel good enough for it. You don't have to earn it. You just have to believe and it's yours. So will you do that this morning? I can think of no better way to start the Christmas season. Let me pray for you that you would. Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, our hearts are full this morning. And our heads are kind of overflowing with all the things we've talked about. The Scriptures are so rich and so deep and so powerful because they can talk about salvation from so long ago. Lord, thank You for the words of Micah that we've studied this morning. Thank you for the subject of prophecy. We live in a time where we can get so short-sighted. We think everything's all about our problems and our issues and our deals. But you're a God who has been planning salvation from eternity past.

And you're a God who has been planning to redeem His people from 1000s of years ago, the beginning of time. So we have nothing to worry about today. When these restrictions go back and forth, and then the government changes his mind. And we have to go this way and that and stand on our head and do all these things. We don't need to be anxious about that. You're a God who's sovereign. And we trust in You. Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning. And maybe those who are listening online, those who are saved, I pray they would take such joy in peace and comfort, and seeing how great their salvation is and seeing how far it goes back. To this long ago, I pray for those who are not converted and they're wrestling with this subject of Christ, they would see that there is nothing like this. There are no other options. There's only one door. There's only one gate to the sheep pen, there's only one shepherd, and it's your Son. So I pray they would see that and believe and be saved, and not be deceived by other things. But in all of these things, Lord, we want you to receive all the glory. As we explore this topic in the weeks to come, we pray that you would continue to enlarge our souls in the subject of Jesus Christ, and we pray this all in His name and for His glory. Amen.