

Welcome to the
seventeenth week of
25 Weeks of Advent!

The stories of Advent all give us some insight as to the point and value of Jesus' life for us.

The deepest meaning of the littleness and insignificance of Bethlehem is that God does not bestow the blessings of the Messiah — the blessings of salvation — on the basis of our greatness or our merit or our achievement. He does not elect cities or people because of their prominence or grandeur or distinction. When he chooses he chooses freely, in order to magnify the glory of his own mercy, not the glory of our distinctions. So let us say with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest!" Not glory to us. We get the joy. He gets the glory.

Prayer Thank you's

Thank so much for all the lovely cards, phone calls & prayers that have helped in my recovery. Sincerely,
Heather Dahl

Thank you for the love & prayers during Bruce's recent surgery. Love & blessings,
Jo & Bruce Noll

Week 17: A True Fairy Tale

Read: Micah 5:2—5

The Insignificance of Bethlehem
and the Great Significance of the One Born There
from John Piper's "From Little Bethlehem Will Come a Ruler in Israel"

Bethlehem is scarcely worth counting among the clans of Judah, yet God chooses to bring his magnificent Messiah out of this town. Why? One answer is that the Messiah is of the lineage of David and David was a Bethlehemite. That's true, but it misses the point of Micah 5:2. The point of verse two is that Bethlehem is small — not that it is great because David was born there. (That's what the scribes missed in Matthew 2:6). God chooses something small, quiet, out of the way, and does something there that changes the course of history and eternity.

Why? Because when he acts this way we can't boast in the merits or achievements of men but only in the glorious mercy of God. We can't say, "Well, of course he set his favour on Bethlehem, look at the human glory Bethlehem has achieved!" All we can say is, "God is wonderfully free; he is not impressed by our bigness; he does nothing in order to attract attention to our accomplishments; he does everything to magnify his glorious freedom and mercy."

The apostle Paul puts it like this in 1 Corinthians 1:27–31:

"God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose 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.... Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

God chose a stable so no innkeeper could boast, "He chose the comfort of my inn!" God chose a manger so that no wood worker could boast, "He chose the craftsmanship of my bed!" He chose Bethlehem so no one could boast, "The greatness of our city constrained the divine choice!" And he chose you and me, freely and unconditionally, to stop the mouth of all human boasting.

