

Series: Why Christmas?
Title: Why Bethlehem?
Text: Micah 5:2
Key Word: Reasons
Proposition: Everyone will understand that God reveals Himself in what would seem to be an insignificant place for significant reasons.

A series of pictures in a popular magazine portrays the story of a one-note musician. ... He takes his seat in the orchestra with the other musicians, arranges his score, and tunes his instrument. On the arrival of the conductor, the music begins with the leader skillfully bringing in first one group of musicians and then another. After a long time the crucial moment arrives — it is the time when the one note is played. The conductor turns to him and his one note sounds forth. Once more, the orchestra plays and the one-note man sits quietly throughout the rest of the concert. . . . One note only! It may be that our part in life's work may be very small . . . but even that is significant. Without our contributions the world would be incomplete.

Bethlehem had only one note to play in the orchestration of God's purpose for the world, but it was an important one! God still works this way today in many unassuming ways, often through unassuming people, in unassuming places. God is at work in this world. As Theodore Cuyler once put it, "Often the most useful Christians are those who serve their Master in little things. He never despises the day of small things, or else He would not hide His oaks in the acorns, or the wealth of a wheat field in bags of little seeds."

Many find it difficult to see God at work in the insignificant, the unassuming, and the obscure. Vance Havner observed, "So many of us are not big enough to

become little enough to be used of God.” The little town of Bethlehem was big enough to become little enough to welcome the Savior. I trust that we will become little enough to welcome the Savior. I hope that we will not bypass the opportunity to welcome Jesus in the small things and small places.

This morning we raise the question why would an all-powerful God who has created the great expanse of the universe chose to reveal Himself through the insignificant, the unassuming, the obscure? Why Bethlehem? Here are a few significant reasons.

First, God often reveals Himself in insignificant places in order to offer significant security. The prophet Micah referred to this security when he wrote, *“And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.”* Micah

5:4b

How many of you grew up in a small town --- say... less than 10,000 people? My wife Melinda grew up in Hardinsburg, Indiana. In 2008, it had a population of 244 people with a median income of \$ 27,000 per household. It sits along US Route 150 in Southern Indiana, about 45 miles due west of Louisville, Kentucky. Bethlehem was like Hardinsburg. At the time of Christ, Bethlehem was a quiet little shepherding community with a population of about 150.

It was one of those small towns where the city limit signs were on the same post. It was like the small town with a Motel 6 that sleeps 6. The Bible tells us that

...there was no room in THE Inn.” It was like the small town where you call a wrong number and they supply you the correct one.

God did not choose his Son to be born in Jerusalem, the city of power and prestige. Nor was he born in a palace, where kings reside. He chose His son to be born in the little town of Bethlehem in a simple stable where His parents laid him in an unassuming manger. Many of that day, would have thought that the Savior would have been born in a prominent place. Times have not changed. Many look for security from places of prominence, importance, and power. Some turn to the government for security and salvation. Yet, our founding fathers though had inner security. Many of them found security in God and in his Son Jesus Christ. I believe they did not intend for a frail human institution to be the nation’s sole source of security. Others turn to their employer. Still others look to others. Unfortunately, many find them all wanting.

God offers us more than sufficient security when we welcome him to be born in the unseen place of our heart. Would you allow your heart to be a birthplace for the Son of God?

Second, God reveals Himself in insignificant places in order to bring us significant peace. Micah testifies that God will come to bring us peace. He said, *“And he shall be one of peace.”* Micah 5:5

Isaiah prophesied, *“For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given---and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, PRINCE OF PEACE.”* Isaiah 9:6

At the announcement of his birth in Luke 2:14 the angels sounded the news, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth PEACE, good will toward men.”*

Jesus said, *“Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.”* John 14:27 With Christ’s first coming we have the opportunity for peace with God, with ourselves, and with others. No more fear of judgment, no more conflict and guilt. He comes to be our prince of peace in a world of chaos, confusion, conflict and insecurity. Peace begins not with others, or with governments, or with institutions, it begins as the songwriter once said, with you and me. Will you allow the Prince of Peace to be born within you this day?

Third, God reveals Himself in insignificant places to provide significant leaders. Luke one of the writers of the New Testament recorded these words of the angel to Mary *“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great...and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”* (Luke 1:31-33) It seems that God raises up leaders from among the most obscure, insignificant places, places where we would least expect it.

Kingfisher, Oklahoma, with a population of about 4300 people rests on the Chisholm cattle trail, where Texas Cattle ranchers would drive their cattle to market.

In 1918, a boy was born and grew up to become the founder of America's largest retailer. Sam Walton opened his first store in 1962 and today Wal-Mart has over 4500 stores.

Milan, OH, with a population of roughly 1400 people is the birthplace of one of America's leading inventors. He provided us the typewriter, motion picture camera, and the light bulb. With an average of four hours of sleep, Thomas Edison turned his perspiration into inspiration.

Point Pleasant, Ohio lies along the Ohio River east of Cincinnati. This small-town, unincorporated village provided Abraham Lincoln with his commander of the Union Forces. Ulysses Grant also served two terms as President of the United States.

God raises significant leaders from insignificant places. No place is too small for God to do great things. No place is so insignificant that God cannot rise up people who can make a difference. No matter where you come from, no matter how insignificant you think your background is, God can do great things through you.

Finally, God reveals Himself in insignificant places to make history. Luke one of the writers of the New Testament wrote: *"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)"* (Luke 2:1-2) Luke's account clearly claims that Mary and Joseph were required to return to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem. Archaeological evidence dating as far back as AD 48 has confirmed that the Roman Government forced its citizens to return to their

birthplace for a census. In addition, they have found a coin with the name “Quirinius” on it placing him as the governor of Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC until after the death of Herod, thus confirming Luke’s witness.

Bethlehem is the Hebrew word meaning “House of Bread.” Micah said that the Savior who said to us, *“I am the bread of life, and he that eats of me shall never die,”* would be born in Bethlehem. It is also known as the “city of David” a prominent king of Israel. The birth of a king, or any child, a new idea, or a new movement is always historic. God is on the move whenever life is created. God is on the move when history is made in obscure places.

Kinzie Sutton grew up in rural Wayne County Kentucky. Most households lived on an income of \$ 28,000 per year. Kinzie’s mom worked as a social worker in the county while her dad served as a youth pastor. As a seven-year-old girl, she inherited her parent’s commitment to service and knew never to take their good fortune at Christmas for granted. Each December, the Sutton dinner conversation focused upon local families in need. Many of her Mom’s clients had lost their jobs during last year’s economic slowdown. The houseboat industry in nearby Monticello collapsed. Many others had not recovered or retooled from the downturn in the coal industry.

Last Christmas, the Suttons sought financial assistance for Ashley, a 22-year-old single-mom with a twelve-month-old son and her 12-year-old brother who lived

with her. Ashley worked in a factory to provide for Evan and Kenny. Kinzie bubbled with excitement anticipating Santa visiting Ashley and her children.

However, they learned that a local organization could not provide the financial assistance to provide a Christmas for Ashley and her family. It looked like there would be no Christmas, no presents, nothing for them that year. When Kinzie learned about this, she went into her bedroom, found her piggy bank and returned to the kitchen, where the rest of the Sutton family were sitting in silence. It did not feel like Christmas anymore.

Kinzie poured out the contents of her piggy bank on the kitchen table. She began counting the change and a few crumpled dollar bills. She had \$ 3.30. Kinzie said, “Mom, I know it’s not much. But maybe this will buy a present for the baby.”

The mood began to shift from despair to hope as each Sutton empty their pockets and piggy banks. Dad began rolling the coins in paper sleeves. By the time they had gathered all they had, they had collected \$ 130.00. Kinzie’s mom, Ann said, “Kinzie, God multiplied your gift.”

Ann told her co-workers about what God was doing in her family. They opened up their purses and emptied their pockets too. Generosity became contagious. By the end of the day, Kinzie’s story spread beyond Ann’s office. She received a phone call from a stranger who heard about Kinzie sacrificial giving and said that he would match her gift 100 times. He contributed \$ 300.00. In just 24 hours, Kinzie’s

gift of all she had turned into \$ 500.00. That was more than enough to supply a Christmas for three.

On Christmas Eve, Kinzie and the rest of the Sutton family delivered Christmas gifts and food in the rain to Ashley and her family. Kinzie and her family, along with Ashley and her brother rained tears of joy too. Ashley said that she hopes she will be able to do something similar for someone else in need. She said, “Kinzie could have used that money for herself, but she gave it away. She’s the type of person I’d like my son to grow up to be.”

One historical event 2000 years ago shaped history in Wayne County Kentucky. Imagine what the Spirit of Christmas can do to shape history in Miami County, OH and even Tanzania Africa where orphans found a home at Angel house. When the historic invasion of God enters into our lives, we make a historic impact upon the lives of others.

One significant God act in the insignificant village of Bethlehem brought security into an insecure world, peace in the midst of conflict, and significance into obscurity, historically shaping individuals and whole communities. This significant act in our lives empowers us to offer security in the midst of the unknown, peace in the midst of turmoil and significance in those who believe their small lives cannot change history. 2064