

12/12

“The Location Foretold”

Micah 5:2 - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans or rulers of Judah,  
out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old, from ancient days.”



Special Music: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Gaither Vocal Band

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwfkGj51S2c>

## THE CHILD COMES

The child comes  
Not to a palace  
Amidst silver and gold  
Not to a temple  
Or wealth untold  
But to a stable  
As the story unfolds  
A place of peace

The child comes  
To this tiny village  
No place to stay  
His parent forced  
To lay him in hay  
In the stillness of a silent night  
As shepherds bow and pray  
In the light of the star

The child comes  
Born in a hamlet  
The birthplace of kings  
Obscure and forgotten  
Although history sings  
In the town of David  
New life springs  
Forth to save the world

**Oh, tiny town of Bethlehem  
Home to nobility  
Yet poor and humble  
A place washed in sacred blood  
As moon and stars tumble  
The theology of humankind  
Mumbles and stumbles  
Into a new reality**

**Tiny world  
Tiny babe  
Tiny town  
About to change  
Turn the world upside down  
The child has come  
And wears a crown  
Hidden in his humility.**

**The king is born  
His birth ordained  
His promised path  
Rumbles the foundation of the world  
As the aftermath  
Of all creation  
Rains down upon the darkness  
Of Humanity**

**In Love**

How many of you have ever been to Stonewall, TX.? Stonewall is located just east of Fredericksburg. In 2019 it had a population of 592 (about 31 people per square mile), which makes it significantly smaller than Fort Stockton. It's hardly a blip on the map. But Stonewall is famous for something. Can anyone tell me what that is? It's the birthplace of LBJ. And although a former president was born there, that fact has done little to increase the population.

We know about small towns. Most of the small towns in Texas are smaller than small towns in other states. Because Texas is so large and spread out, the distance between these small towns can be determined by the amount of gasoline in the tanks of our vehicles. Still, some of these small towns are well known, not because of their size, but more because of their contribution to Texas and United States history. Places like Goliad and Gonzalez remain small, but every child in the seventh grade in Texas can tell you about the importance of these town in shaping Texas history.

That's the story of Bethlehem. At the time of the Jesus' birth, Bethlehem was a little smaller than Grandfalls, TX. William A. Albright, the leading theorist and practitioner of biblical archeology, puts the population of Bethlehem at approximately 300 on that most holy of nights. When put into perspective, Bethlehem was a tiny village. It was not a popular destination spot. People passing through the town might stop and get something to eat or maybe rest their animals. The arrival of Jesus did not change that.

No Bethlehem's claim to fame at the time of our Lord's birth, had nothing to do with Jesus. But they did have something else. It was the birthplace and home

of King David. There probably weren't any public parks or monuments to that effect, but it is where David grew up and it was the home base for his men as Saul chased them around the countryside. This is where David and his brothers grew up, where he took care of his father's sheep, where Samuel came to anoint him as the next king. Bethlehem is the City of David. It is the place that the angel appearing to the shepherds declares:

**Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:11-12**

The story is told of an elderly shopkeeper, a sweet lady with a wonderful disposition that struggled with her eyesight. One evening, a businessman walked by to see her on her hands and knees in front of her shop with her face almost touching the sidewalk. Like everyone else in the small town, he knew the shopkeeper and was concerned. "Ms. Jones? Is everything okay? What in the world are you doing?" the man asked the woman.

She stopped for a moment and looked up to him. "I managed to drop a dime and now my cash register won't balance. My eyesight is not what it used to be, but I am doing my best to try and find that silly dime."

"Well, let me help you find it, Ms. Jones." And with that the businessman, still in his fine suit, got down on his hands and knees and began searching with her.

In a little while, Ms. Jones' granddaughter happened by and was shocked to see her grandmother on her hands and knees on the sidewalk looking for something. The business man in his fine suit was there as well doing the same thing. "What are you looking for, grandma?"

"I lost a dime, sweetie, and I can't seem to find it."

"Well, let me help," said the granddaughter as she joined her grandmother and the businessman in their search.

Several more people stopped by and began to help. The night sky had become very dark, but they all continued the search under the streetlamp. At last, the businessman stood up and asked, "Ms. Jones, are you sure that you lost your dime here? Was this the last place you saw it?"

"Of course not. I lost it in the shop by the cash register when I was making change earlier."

Everyone stopped looking and stared at the shopkeeper. "Then why, Ms. Jones, are we all looking out here for your lost dime?"

"Oh, you silly man. Can't you see? My shop is so very dark and several of the light fixtures do not work. The light is much better here."

And with that, they all stopped looking, stood up and went on their way, shaking their heads in dismay.

## **Micah 5:2**

**“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans or rulers of Judah,  
out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old, from ancient days.”**

God promised the Jews a Messiah. God spoke through prophets to inform the people that the Messiah was coming. The prophet Isaiah told them who they should be looking for, and the prophet Micah told them where to look. But everyone was dazzled by what they thought was obvious and not looking in the right direction. Without even realizing it, religious leaders had created a distraction. **“The City of David is, of course, Jerusalem. Everyone knows that. This is where David built his palace. It is where his son built the temple. It has been the religious center for all of Israel for thousands of years, even after the temple was destroyed.”** There is a common prayer that has been prayed at the end of Passover for centuries. **“Next year, in Jerusalem.”** A common hope of a rebuilt Temple and a reunion of all Jews. It is a bright and shiny place, rich in history, tradition, and spiritual reflection. If we are going to get on our hands and knees and look for the Messiah, it will be in Jerusalem. The light is better there.

The Jews were so intent on finding the Messiah where they believed he would be, that they would not let a star, or a chorus of angels distract them. Bethlehem. A dingy little town where nothing ever happened. Where half the shop lights were out. Where the main industry was raising sheep. Where filthy

and smelly shepherds hung out. Where the hotel probably only had a couple of rooms. Where the air was full of the smell of wet wool. A place never considered a destination, unless forced to go there by the government. A has-been of a town that one might pass through on the way to somewhere else. It is approximately six miles south of Jerusalem. Surely not the birthplace of anyone significant. Unless, of course, you consider King David.

If we really take time to look at the life of our Lord, what more perfect place could there be for His birth? Could the 'Son of Man' be born in more humbling circumstances? Can we find significance that the humble and gracious life of our Lord Jesus Christ began in a tiny village, a stable, a feed trough? Can we take our minds off the glory and glitz of Jerusalem in order to open our eyes and see the truth?

I would like to say that we have managed to get beyond the pizzazz and pageantry of Christmas, allowing us to focus on what is truly important during the season. But we all get caught up in the tree trimming, light hanging, gift giving extravaganza that attracts our eyes, ears, and nose. I'm right there with you. I love the bright lights. I love to listen to Christmas music. I love the smell of scotch pine and hot apple cider. I love Christmas.

But I know in my heart that while I watch the merriment and wonder at the grandeur of the city, there is a baby being born in a dark pole barn, outside of the splendor of the lights that distract me, without all the theatrics and dazzle of the season. A place graced with humility, ...and I feel the tug.



**Where do we want to be? What is truly important to us? I don't want anyone to misunderstand me. I love the atmosphere of Christmas. I love seeing friends and family. I love the feeling that comes with the glow of Christmas, the warmth of a fire and the taste of candy canes, hot chocolate, and pecan pie. Sometimes I feel like I am sitting at mile three between Bethlehem and Jerusalem and both are calling to me. Do I go to the party, or do I return to the tiny town of Bethlehem where I know there is no bed for me tonight? No warm blanket? No ham or turkey? No hot cider or eggnog? Where the streets are dark and the barn even darker? To prostrate myself before a feed trough and worship the child born to bring me into a right relationship with my creator?**

**The problem that we each face every year is that we choose to go to the party thinking that after we celebrate for a little while, we will go back to Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child. But we are human. And if we are truly honest with ourselves, we know that we will probably stay at the party longer than we intended and may never make our way back to Bethlehem. We make that baby in a manger, the one that will grow into the savior of our souls, the one that will give body and blood for the redemption of our sins, the one to whom we owe everything; we make that baby play second fiddle to the bling of our desires.**

**I weep when I realize I have done this. As much as I love Jesus, there are times that I let the season get away from me, that I allow the secular strands of icicle lights and shopping sales get between me and my relationship with the gift my creator gave me, Jesus Christ, my brother, counselor, healer, purpose, and hope.**

**My prayer for all of us this Christmas, is that we are able to turn towards Bethlehem, and embrace the joy that can only be found there in the wonder and awe of a silent night that changed the world for the better. Let us focus and know that Jesus Christ plays second fiddle to no one. I pray that none of us chooses a relationship with the hollowness of the holidays over our relationship with the King of Kings and commander of our souls. And I pray that the joy that we find in this season emanates from our hearts as God uses us as his hands and feet to change the world.**

**God bless you all!**

**AMEN**

**Copyright © 2021 Rev. Walt Wellborn**

**Scripture references provided under copyright by:**

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973,  
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved  
worldwide.**