Text: Micah 5:2-5

**Introduction**

I haven’t been paying much attention to the theological virtues theme that our bulletin covers have been proclaiming. But today the virtue or status of peace is brought to the foreground. And it is brought for two great themes of the old testament that the prophet Micah is calling forth.

**Text**

The first theme is how God always seems to choose the small, the weak, the despised things of the world. It is the choosing of Jacob over Esau. It is the choosing of David the youngest and smallest of the sons of Jesse. Probably the most consistent story of this is the story of Gideon from Judges. When the LORD calls Gideon, Gideon replies, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." (Jdg. 6:15 ESV) Manasseh, a half tribe, not even a full one. The smallest clan, the least family, and the last kid. The LORD brushes Gideon’s complaints aside with, “Sure, but I am with you.” And we know how that story plays out. Gideon recruits a mighty army, and God keeps sending more home, until he has his 300. But God is with them.

There are a multitude of reasonings that can be hung on that theme, but the most basic is that you know. This is the hand of God. Israel didn’t leave Egypt because of a slave revolt, but because God bared his arm with signs and wonders. God chose Abraham and God made him into a great nation. And when God starts something new, it comes from the smallest weakest place. A long dead line of Kings, 500 years plus dead. A village so small, it can’t even be considered a clan. “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.” This is the hand of God.

The second theme is the idea of a remnant. Or maybe more importantly, long after everyone in the world thinks something is gone, God recalls. God has never given up his claim. And I think this applies in a couple of ways. Micah says, “Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.” When Micah speaks of this return, who is he talking about?

The birth is simply the birth of the messiah, the one promised from of old, from ancient days. When the messiah is born you will see this return start. But the return of who? The first and very Jewish answer would be the 10 Northern Tribes. Micah is a prophet during and after the Assyrian victory and carting off of that Northern Kingdom. For now, God let’s the world think it has them. But it doesn’t. “His brothers shall return.”

But I think there is something from even more ancient days very similar. In Genesis 10 you have something that is called the table of the nations. Underneath a genealogy of the sons of Noah you have all the nations of the world. It concludes, “these are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.” And after Babel, where mankind tried to stay together by their own strength, they scatter. And the bible gives us a list of descendants of Shem to Terah, and then further the descendants of Terah. And only then do you get Abram. The least of the nations of the world, not even a nation himself. But the special possession of the LORD who would make him into a nation. But the table is there, the genealogy is remembered, because the LORD remembers. The LORD never completely abandoned the rest. When the messiah comes, “then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.”

Salvation is from the Jews, but it is for all the nations. At that time the nations will stream in. From every “people, tribe, language and nation.”

**Application**

And why might they do that?

Life among the nations is an exile full of longing. Everything that the world promises will fulfill that longing, never does. Our hearts are restless, until we find our rest in you.

“he shall stand and shepherd his flock” – beside the still waters to the restoration of our souls.

“in the majesty of the name of the LORD.” – blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. This is Immanuel, God with us.

“And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great, to the ends of the earth.” No longer an isolated people, but a people called from the ends of the earth. No longer the least but lead by one who sits at the right hand of God. He is our sure defense, under the shelter of his wings, as he longed to gather Jerusalem, we dwell secure.

“He shall be our peace.” No longer at war with God, this child is our peace. Our war with the world staggers on to its completion, but that is a mop up effort. Because God is with us.

All the promises from of old have been fulfilled, because the ancient one has come to be with his people. He calls for the return of all his brothers. Wherever they may be found. To enter into his eternal peace.