

## O Little Town of Bethlehem

“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.” Micah 5:2



God’s choosing of Bethlehem Ephrathah to become a place of esteem and renown was uniquely tied to the blessing bestowed on Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 4:11). It was foreshadowed in David and fulfilled in Jesus, God’s Anointed King, when he was born in Bethlehem.

I’ve often wondered, however, if God doesn’t delight in choosing “small places” from which to bring people who will trust him in simple faith, who will worship him with simple song, as David did, while going about the normal routine of life. And then He calls them and equips them for His chosen task. And when they finally look back on where they have come from and what God has done, with David they stand amazed and say, “Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?” (II Chron. 17:16)

I don’t have conclusive evidence that “the small town” produces more servants of God than those called from the city. However, it is interesting that Jesus grew up in Nazareth of Galilee and that his accent would have stereotyped him to the elite of Jerusalem as coming from the “less educated” part of the country. Jesus Himself saw the irony that those who were educated in the Scriptures and worked daily in the Temple were totally ignorant of His identity and purpose in coming. *He said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things **from the wise and intelligent** and have revealed them to **infants**. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. Matthew 11:25, 26* Sophistication and deep intellectual parsing of words and phrases from the Old Testament not only were not prerequisites to God-pleasing faith, it appears that they were often stumbling blocks to it.

When Paul shared the historical message of Jesus, he found the same response. He wrote: *“For consider your calling, brethren, that there were **not many wise** according to the flesh, **not many mighty, not many noble**; but God has chosen **the foolish things** of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen **the weak things** of the world to shame the things which are strong.”* (I Corinthians 1:26-27) Given that Paul himself received a top education in Jerusalem from the top rabbi of his day, he must have been surprised that “just explaining the facts” to his educated friends didn’t lift the veil of blindness from their eyes, while common folks who responded in simple trust were given spiritual sight.

Kind of amazing that out of that hole-in-the-wall place, Bethlehem, God brought His Savior-King to have the name that is above every name.

**How silently, how silently**  
**The wondrous gift is given!**  
**So God imparts to human hearts**  
**The blessings of His heaven.**  
**No ear may hear His coming,**  
**But in this world of sin,**  
**Where meek souls will receive him still,**  
**The dear Christ enters in.**