



### Fourth Weekend in Advent

The season of Advent, from the Latin word ‘adventus’ which means ‘coming,’ begins four weeks prior to Christmas. During Advent, Christians expectantly wait for the nativity of Jesus, anticipate His second coming, and wait with hope for the peace on earth that the angels announced to the shepherds on the night of the first Christmas.

### Micah 5:2–5a (NIV)

“But you, *Bethlehem Ephrathah*, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son...<sup>4</sup> He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.<sup>5</sup> And he will be our peace...

### The Prophecy

But you, *Bethlehem Ephrathah*, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. Micah 5:2 (NIV)

- “Bethlehem” – Hebrew meaning \_\_\_\_\_  
*...I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry...* John 6:35 (NIV)
- “Ephrathah” – Hebrew meaning \_\_\_\_\_  
*I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit...* John 15:5 (GNT)
- The prophecy was made about 700 years before Jesus’ birth.

### Bethlehem’s Colorful History

- First mentioned outside scripture in 1250 BC in a letter from one of the kings of Palestine to an Egyptian Pharaoh.
- In Genesis, Isaac’s son, Jacob, and his wife, Rachel, passed through Bethlehem. Rachel gave birth to a son, but died in childbirth. Rachel is buried in Bethlehem.
- In the book of Ruth, Ruth found redemption from the pain of her past, and found hope, family and a future in Bethlehem.
- It was in Bethlehem that the Wise Men came asking King Herod where they could find the newborn King of the Jews.

## **○ Little Town of Bethlehem**

Phillips Brooks was born on December 13, 1835 in Boston, MA. He graduated from Harvard and began teaching Latin at the Boston Latin School. He was so frustrated, dissatisfied and unfulfilled that he soon quit. In his depression, he turned to Bible Study and prayer.

Still unsure of his future, he enrolled in seminary. When he graduated, he was called to be the pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia. The church experienced unprecedented growth and his fame as an outstanding preacher spread.

By 1863, due to the stress of the Civil War, Brooks was physically, mentally and spiritually exhausted. Just when the war was ending, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and Brooks was asked to preach his funeral.

In an attempt to recover his own faith, Brooks took a sabbatical and left for the Holy Land. The trip changed his life and renewed his calling. He returned to Philadelphia a new man. He attempted to tell his congregation what he had experienced, but could not find the words.

In December 1868, as he was preparing the sermon he would deliver on Christmas Day, the words came to him in the form of a poem. He showed the words to his organist, Lewis Redner. Redner struggled to find a tune, but on Christmas Eve while lying in bed, the tune came.

On Christmas Day 1868, in worship at Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” was sung for the first time.

## **○ Little Town Of Bethlehem**

words by Phillips Brooks, music by Lewis Redner

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above

While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love

O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth

And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth

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

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray

Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell

O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.