Our text for meditation is the Old Testament lesson read earlier as recorded by the prophet Micah.

**The Ruler Comes**

**Micah 5:2-4**

Christmas Day

12.25.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ. Amen.

A ruler? A king? Someone to whom men will bow down and worship? Never!

But, we will get on bended knee to look at the baby in the stroller or in the car seat carry-all. We will look at the cherubic face and proclaim the child’s innocence. We may even babble some incoherency at the child as if they could somehow understand baby talk, “ooo, widdoo babby so cute!”

We may look at the parents of a child to gauge what the future may hold in store for them. What will they grow up to do? Do certain family names mean they fall into certain family businesses? The name Kennedy conjures images of democratic east coast politics, just as the name Bush conjures images of southern republicans. There are three Watts that are all playing professional football right now. If your name is Preus, there is a good possibility that you are an LCMS pastor.

Of course, where there is a king, usually the first-born son will come of age and rule when they finally die.

What did Mary and Joseph think when looking at their child? It was not much of a birth in regard to fanfare. Oh yeah, both Mary and Joseph had received private angelic visitations and pronouncements they could easily remember, but where were the angels now?

There had to be some doubt in the minds of both Mary and Joseph. Sure, they probably stared in wide-eyed wonder at this new gift of life, a son. But considering who they had been told this Child was, this was certainly a humble beginning; horses, oxen, and donkeys were gathered in His nursery. There was no bed in which to lay him. No satin sheets – not even linen or cotton – simply wrapped in strips of cloth.

Can you imagine Mary and Joseph’s thoughts, given the circumstances? Is this Child lying before us in this manger the One who created the world and laid the foundation of the universe? Is this the King of Kings? Will He be the One to redeem Israel? Will He feed the flock? He does not appear to have the majesty of God!

There was nothing about this Child which set Him apart from other children. As Isaiah declared, *he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.* (Isaiah 53:2 ESV) Just as we do with most children, to have an idea of what the Child would be like, they looked at the parents.

But His true Father is God almighty. This is the ruler promised of long ago. Do not look at that which is able to be seen with the eyes, remember the words of the angels. Do not consider Him according to worldly standards, regard Him with the eyes of faith.

His whole life was quietly humble. While He wandered the Judean countryside preaching and performing miracles with many flocking to hear and see Him, many despised Him and rejected Him. His apparent earthly lineage was thrown into His face, “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son?”

Humble were His earthly origins at birth. Some thirty years later, He did manage to draw the attention and the ire temple leadership. They had Him arrested and brought Him to the Roman curator, Pilate, on trumped up charges. Finally, He was crucified, given the most despicable death reserved for the only the most vile of criminals.

It is a cross which Christ takes up as His scepter to begin His rule. His death defeats sin and death. His resurrection sets the captives free.

Can you see these great things as you gaze at in the Babe of Bethlehem? Do you see your Ruler in the manger? Is your King visible in swaddling clothes?

By faith that Mary and Joseph saw not just another child, but a that their Child was also their Savior and King, the Ruler over Israel. By the Word of God, the Spirit’s work of faith gave them eyes to see, eyes which looked beyond the obvious outward appearance.

Faith is the greatest miracle connected with the birth of Jesus.

It is by faith that you have gathered this day. It is the Spirit at work in you through your hearing the Word of Christ which gives you eyes of faith to see beyond what simple flesh would apprehend.

You see in this Child, the Babe of Bethlehem, Him who grew up to be your Savior from sin and death. By faith, you see Him as King of kings and Lord of Lords.

Dearly beloved of God, your Ruler, who was foretold from everlasting to everlasting, comes to you with salvation.

Your Ruler comes, to feed you – take eat, this is My body.

Your Ruler comes, to quench your thirst – take drink, this is My blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

Your ruler comes, to declare to you good news – as I live and reign forever, so you too shall live, with Me, forever.

Today, the miracle of Christmas takes place again, for it is by faith that you see Jesus as more than a cute little baby, but as your Savior God. Let your hearts be the manger throne where your King comes to rule. Amen.