

“Little Town, Big Peace”
Sermon Discussion Guide for December 10, 2023

You may choose to open this discussion time by simply sharing whether or not you feel at peace this week. Don't feel pressured to alleviate, or fix, just notice where each person in the group is at this time.

Ice-breaker question: Can you think of a time when you felt truly at peace? Where were you? What were you doing? Was there something that happened to make you feel that way?

The theme of ordinary people in ordinary places plays heavily in this week's sermon. (David the shepherd boy growing up to be king; Jesus born to peasant parents; Bethlehem – a tiny town on the outskirts of the city of Jerusalem)

- Pastor Andy said, “God reaches out to the ordinary and does great things with them.” Can you identify with these people or situations?
- Where have you seen God do great work through ordinary people or circumstances?

Read Matthew 2:1-12.

- Why was Herod and all of Jerusalem “disturbed” by the news that a new king was born?
- What does it mean that this “ruler will shepherd my people Israel”? Why the shepherd imagery?

Read Micah 5:1-5a (stop at “fortresses” or “palaces”).

- Verse 5 says “He will be our peace when the Assyrians invade...”
 - o What does this tell you about peace?
 - o Andy mentioned there are several possible ways to translate the Hebrew word “Shalom”. (Prosperity/success; contentment; friendly greeting or parting words; personal safety; absence of war; salvation.) Which do you think best applies here? What, from the surrounding context in Micah, makes you think that?
 - o Once again, why does Micah now use shepherd imagery?

Read John 10: 1-18

- Jesus says he is “the good shepherd”. What are some characteristics (using John's words), and what does that mean for you?
- Look at verses 12-13. If you are comfortable discussing, have you ever been hurt or disappointed by one of these “hired hands” – perhaps a person that you initially trusted? How is Jesus different?

Here is what Andy mentioned as the different ways in which we are offered peace through Christ. Take a moment to share with each other what stands out for you:

- Peace with God (see Romans 5:1 and Isaiah 53:5)
- Peace with others (see Ephesians 2:14-18)
- Peace with yourself (see Phillipians 4:4-7)
- Eternal peace (Isaiah 2:4/Micah 4:3; Revelation 7:9-17)

Before closing with prayer, ask if there are any members of the group are not experiencing peace this season. If they are comfortable, allow them to name what is upsetting them. Then, in a way that is authentic to your group, ask for the Lord's presence and intercession in their life.