Born in Bethlehem
Luke 1:26-33, Matthew 2:19-23, John 1:43-46, Isaiah 11:1-3
December 1, 2019

WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

1. When you hear the word "Advent" what comes to mind? How are you feeling about this season of the year?
2. Where did you grow up? What is that area's reputation?
3. Name a place you've always wanted to travel to/live in. Why are you interested? Now identify a place you would never want to visit/live in. Why is this the case?
4. What does it feel like to come from a town or to graduate from a school that no one has heard of -- where people say, "Where's that"?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Read through the gospel passages. Why would God choose to have Jesus grow up in Nazareth, a place that no one had heard of or even make fun of? How do you think his audience would have reacted to this?
2. What difference might it have made if Jesus grew up in Jerusalem instead of Nazareth? What advantages might living in Nazareth have over residing in Jerusalem?
3. The rags-to-riches story is a popular success narrative in America. How is Jesus' path similar and yet different than this narrative?
4. Reflect on the saying "It doesn't matter where you come from, all that matters is where you're going." In your experience, is this true?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What insights about hope can you draw from knowing that Jesus grew up in a place that most never heard of or held in low regard? What do you learn about God?
2. What are the insignificant and discarded places in your life (your Nazareth) that you may need to trust God for? Spend some time praying over these.
3. In conjunction with our fall sermon series on our neighborhoods and workplaces, the Evergreen map of LA invites us to identify the places we long to see God bring hope to. Where do we see are the areas of greatest hopelessness, and what is God calling us to do this Advent season?
4. The shoot from the stump is a very powerful image of life coming from death. Have you experienced something similar in your life? What did you learn?