

Sermon on **Matthew 2:13-23** for 1/1/23
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Happy New Year. We look back on the old year. We look ahead to the new. As we consider God's Word we we meet a challenge: Great joys are often mixed with awful difficulties in our lives. Your team wins the championship but you broke your arm with two games left to go. You have a great family celebration, but mourn that a loved one wasn't there. You rejoice over all who came to hear God's Word, but lament that there were a lot who stayed away and weren't rejoicing over the newborn king. We can be positive pollys and ignore the bad completely as though it doesn't exist, or we can be negative nellys and focus only on the bad and become pessimistic. Or we can learn from God's Word why we can face the blessings and struggle of each new day and new year with certainty in God, His Word and His Way:

The Son Brings Peace to our Peaceless World.

1) Learn to trust God who always fulfills his promises.

2) Enjoy contentment in God's perfect care for you.

"When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judah in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:13-23 NIV 2011).

Unsettling events. Tragic Events. The slaughter of innocents in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, but more recently - Sandy Hook Elementary School, The Mall of America Last Week, Columbine, the amount of sinful abortions over the past decades, murder in the streets, and the list of awful tragedies pile up. It's hard to turn on the news or open the paper, or look at your newsfeed. But in Jesus' day, it wasn't just the people committing these atrocities, it was the government that was charged by God to protect them and rule fairly and justly. Herod claimed to be the King of the Jews – a Jewish king! Rather than learn more about the true Messiah and King of Kings when wise men came from the East to worship the newborn king of the Jews, all Herod could think in his anger and rage was to kill him. So is the way the sinful world goes in which we live. So is the way sinful hearts dark in this sinful world operate. Herod ordered the immediate slaughter of baby boys in Bethlehem area 2 years old and under. Just hearing of such violence hits your heart. Just think of having to endure what those mothers did. Herod shows us that the sinful world hates the Lord and the truth and true love, God's love, and seeks to snuff it out. But into a sinful world, even to our sinful hearts **the Son Brings Peace to our Peaceless World. 1) Learn to trust God who always fulfills his promises.**

The Gospel writer Matthew stands out delivering details in a matter-of-fact way, and not including many details we might like. Matthew sticks to his purpose to have you understand all that happened in Jesus' life, and all he did, all that happened to him was a fulfillment of God's promises from centuries before, and it was done for you. **The Holy Spirit helps us learn to trust God who always fulfills his promises.**

Honest biblical scholars know that one of the main tenants of biblical interpretation is not injecting your meaning or imagination into Scripture, but to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Here we see two prophecies and passages of the Old Testament prophets – Hosea and Jeremiah finding their full fulfillment in what happened here. The babies were killed and Jeremiah's prophecy of grief was fulfilled in full (31:15). Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt by the angel's command. God fulfilled the prophecy of Hosea when he brought the

Israelites, “his son” up out of Egypt, but fully fulfilled it when he brought the Son of God back from Egypt (Hosea 11:1). God spared his son – protecting him from the bloodlust of a jealous tyrant king. He didn’t just transport him magically, but sent an angel to warn Joseph, his adopted father, to take him and protect him.

God puts people in your life to take care of you in home, school, state and church. Today we are reminded to give thanks for godly fathers. Godly fathers not only seek family’s physical welfare and protection, but also bring their families to hear the Word, who care about raising them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Statistics confirm the important role a godly father has in the life of his children, especially bringing them and sitting with them in the pew in worship. Not all are blessed with a godly father, but give thanks for those that are. Pray for godly fathers. Encourage the young men and men in your life to be godly fathers and support them in this, not nagging them, but encouraging with God’s Word and support. Joseph obeyed God’s message through his angel – to bring him down to Egypt in flight. Probably not the easiest trip after an eventful day with an infant. Joseph obeyed the message to come back to Israel. We don’t have any recorded words from Joseph, but his obedience to God’s command and fatherly actions speak. “He got up, took the child and his mother...”

Yes, these 11 verses from God’s Word can challenge our sensitivities. They give rise to questions like, “Why couldn’t God have saved all those babies, or taken out Herod before he did such things?” “If God is love, how could he do this?” These aren’t just the taunts of unbelievers, are they? These questions arise in our hearts when we or people in our lives suffer, are involved in an accident, cancer, or die tragically. We cry out, “Why!?” The Lord hears us. He doesn’t whisper the specific reason he allows this or that evil to seem to thrive in some areas, or why he allows us to suffer whether in our heart, our body, our mind, or soul. The devil would love to use these doubts to have us turn away from him. And some have. But make no mistake, dear Christian, God does care. God is love. And turning away from him would only make the situation even more dire, evil and despairing, because you’d lose the only one who can rescue you from all this and the one who cares for you the most.

God did spare his Son on that day when Herod sent assassins from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, while others suffered horrible, untimely deaths. That can be offensive, but even more offensively amazing is that God did not spare his Son on that day when the debt of our sins and shame came due before our holy and righteous God. God didn’t spare his Son, but sent him to suffer an untimely death on a cross to pay your debt, so that all who believe in him will not die and go to hell, but will live eternally in heaven with him. Jesus did not run, but appeared before king Herod, this Herod’s son, to be mocked and ridiculed and condemned. Jesus appeared before the rulers of his people (Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) and the rulers of this world (Pontius Pilate) and they sentenced him to death, death on a cross. Why? They raged like Herod to snuff him out, but God, in a great act of mercy which silences all of our complaints against God, all of our doubts about whether or not he has our best in mind, God punished his Son in your place, that you and I have forgiveness and life now and eternally. This too fulfilled God’s prophecies. Matthew didn’t stop the story here, but takes us through the life of Jesus and his sacrifice for us and resurrection, proving our forgiveness and life won. Yes, Matthew challenges us to see just how much God did for you, Jesus suffered for you, and just how much God loves you. All this for you. **Enjoy contentment in God’s perfect care for you.**

A New Year. We gather in God’s house because we need a Savior for this past year for the sinners we are and the times we failed to do what he commanded us, and the times we shamefully went our own sinful way. His cross assures us we are forgiven. His Word proclaims it. Our baptisms connected us to it. And the Supper gives us it with Christ’s body and blood for us. We gather in God’s house because we need a Savior in the year to come. We need to thank him for the blessings he has showered on us this past year. We need help to make changes in our lives that need to be made. He will help us turn away from sin. He will help strengthen us to withstand the temptations that will keep coming. He will grant peace even in the difficulties that accompany the blessings. This is a New Year for you, but God never changes in his promises to you, in his love for you. He proved it by sending his Son for you, by fulfilling all the promises he’s ever made for you, and he will keep them still. **Enjoy the contentment and confidence God’s loving care gives for you.**

The Son Brings Peace to our Peaceless World. 1) Learn to trust God who always fulfills his promises. 2) Enjoy contentment in God’s care for you. Have a Blessed New Year in Jesus. Amen.