

Matthew 2:13-23  
January 1, 2017

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Are you tired and worn out? You are not alone. I am with you! For so many those days following Christmas are a time to recover from all the preparations that went into decorating the house, baking the treats, sending the cards, wrapping the presents, preparing for family, and then cleaning up. Still others may be tired from traveling long hours and fighting hectic lines at the airport. Others may just be in a post-Christmas slump as it is hard to watch loved ones depart, which might only be seen once or twice a year. For others holidays and Christmas in particular may just be a difficult and lonely season as they have no family or their family has been separated for some reason. Perhaps you have been on vacation this past week and come today dreading the fact that it is now time to face reality again and face the mounting emails and phone messages upon your return to work tomorrow. Or perhaps, you're just a bit drowsy from ringing in the New Year last night.

Whatever it may be, we need a jolt of something this morning and Matthew sure gives us one but perhaps not exactly what we were looking for only a week after Christmas. Here we are still fresh on the heels of Christmas Eve, the excitement it brings, the awe we feel as the lights go out and we stand together singing "Silent Night" by the glow of flickering candles. Many of us in our weary state of mind need to feel that same energy and excitement again and hear the good news of the birth of our

Savior but instead we hear what on face value appears to be quite the opposite. Truthfully, where is the joy, hope, and good news in this passage? Weren't things supposed to be better now that the long awaited Savior has come? After reading and listening to this passage it doesn't appear the birth of Christ has changed anything. We still have ruthless leaders who succumb to the fear of losing power and will do anything at all cost to protect their status and control including seeking out and killing all children in and around Bethlehem two years old or under. We have the holy family fleeing in the middle of night becoming refugees in another land seeking shelter and safety from the hands of foreigners. We have wise men returning to their home probably tired and also in fear of their lives after failing to return to Herod and tell him the location of the new born King of Israel. We have echoes of Jeremiah and the wailing and tears of Rachel's lamentation.

But as is the case with difficult texts we pray God's Spirit is nearby continuing to guide and shed some light. And of course, that light is Jesus fleeing in the dark night from an evil ruler. The hope that emanates from that light is that He enters into the darkness. He becomes a refugee for us. He lives under the threat of fear for us. He experiences what it is like to be weary for us. God doesn't sit high above the ugliness of human sin but rather in Christ God chooses to enter into the very midst of it and experience first-hand that real life involves real pain and suffering. There is good news in that, although often times hidden, God is at work faithfully watching over God's

people and delivering them safely through the storm. At times that takes much longer than we would like, such as two years in this text, and even then the holy families plans are once again disrupted and they must change course - yet in the end God does not abandon them. Perhaps, the comfort of this passage is found in Rachel's lamentation. Maybe in it we find a window into the text - an opportunity to weep with her and bring before God our own lamentations. Perhaps she gives us the freedom to "acknowledge the brokenness of our world and the stain of human sin that pervades the landscapes of our lives." (Sharon Blezard, [www.stewardshipoflife.org](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org)) Just maybe in this text Matthew allows us to mourn the lack of stability and control we really have over this thing we call life.

There is no doubt in life we need those moments of joy and happiness. Yet, we also need spaces where we can safely lament those things that weigh heavily on our hearts – loneliness, pain, suffering, injustices in the world, etc. We need the permission to know it is OK to let down our guard and just cry and let it all out. It isn't a sign of weakness. It's a sign that we are human and we are in need of a savior. Our Savior is that One born in a manger. Our Savior is that one forced to flee his homeland due to a ruler who was in fear of losing power. Our Savior is that one who will grow old and weep over the dead body of a dear friend. Our Savior is that one who will hang from a cross and cry out for the presence of God. Our Savior is the one why we gather this morning and every time the church gathers for worship. He meets us in our suffering.

He comforts us in our grief. He walks with us in our fears. He comes to us through one another. He sustains us as we partake of the holy meal and hear the words that he is our savior. He is the world's savior. He has died so that we can live. Nothing in the world can separate us from him and the love of his father. We gather in the weary states we often find ourselves as sinners to be reminded of the promise that once again brings us life, strength, and energy – that while sinners we are also saints whom God forgives through our Savior Jesus Christ. Whom God calls to be the body of Christ. Whom God uses to do God's work in the world.

This text gives us the promise that God is always at work. Even when it might appear God is absent and the evil forces and power hungry rulers are winning God remains vigilant in God's efforts to save and redeem the world. Amen.