

Fulfilled

HIS PROMISE KEPT. OUR LONGING MET.

OPENING UP

What is your favorite Christmas tradition and why?

TEXT**A Blue Christmas | Matthew 2:16-21**

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

¹⁹ But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.” ²¹ And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

To continue with the second reading, turn to Jeremiah 31:15-17 in an ESV Bible.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Big Idea: In Jesus, our mourning turns to hope.
(4 movements for how mourning turns to hope)

1. The reality of evil. (Matthew 2:16)
2. The role of lament. (Matthew 2:17-18, Jeremiah 31:15)
3. The emergence of hope. (Matthew 2:19a, Jeremiah 31:16)
4. The promise of return. (Matthew 2:20-21, Jeremiah 31:17)

DISCUSSION



- In Matthew 2:16 we read about King Herod having all babies under the age of 2 killed! This evil reality is not something we usually think about when we reflect upon Christmas, but the existence of evil is important to the rest of the story. What moments in your life have you been convinced of the reality of evil in our world?
- Herod's evil decree led to the lament of those who tragically lost children. Matthew quotes Jeremiah to show how this lament fulfilled prophecy. The act of lamenting can often be a challenge for people. Why do you think this is the case? How do you think things would change if we learned better how to lament individually and communally?
- Read Jeremiah 31:15-17 and note the change in tone that happens from verse 15 to 16. The promise of God brings hope! The emergence of hope can be a powerful experience. When was a time in your life when you experienced the power of hope? What brought hope to you at that moment?
- Jesus promises to return. Read Revelation 21:3 – 4. As you hear these words, what stands out to you? What do you long for out of these verses?
- The holidays are not always cheerful and happy for everyone. The realities of pain, loss, and loneliness are often present during the Christmas season. Are you or someone you know experiencing mourning right now? How can you be encouraged or encourage someone else to find hope in Jesus?

LIFE CHALLENGE



In Jesus, our mourning is turned into hope. Reflect upon the evil confronting you today and take time to lament what it's done to your world. But don't stay there. Turn to Psalm 63 and meditate upon the way David, the author of this Psalm, moves from lament to praise in one chapter. Allow the praise of God and the truth of his promises bring an emergence of hope to your spirit. Consider doing this exercise with a loved one who is struggling or sharing this idea with someone who needs it.

CLOSING PRAYER



God, the reality of evil is all around us. Pain and hardships overshadow many of our holiday celebrations. Help us to lament well and to hold onto the hope we have in Christ. Recall to our minds your promises and open our eyes to who we can share them with. Thank you for loving us and giving us hope. Amen.