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## WHY LIFE IS HARD FOR JESUS AND HIS PEOPLE

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### Part 4 of He Made Us Family: God's Work, Our Witness 2012

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Matt. 2:13-23 | January 06, 2013

*The biggest opportunity in the world is to be a part of God's people, God's family, his church, and what he is doing.*

*There are some amazingly faithful people that have made this into a vibrant, growing family.*

*I just couldn't look at anything without actually seeing that God was telling me that he loved me.*

*If Jesus is ultimately important, then the people who love Jesus are critically important to us as well.*

### THE REST OF MATTHEW 2

I love the Christmas season. It lasts basically from just after Thanksgiving through the first week of January. And during that season, every year, the same stories come up, both in the church and in the culture, we revisit every year, Matthew 1–2, we look at the birth of Jesus. We look at his mother, Mary. We look at his father, Joseph. We see him in the manger. We include the wise men who came from the east. This is in the nativity scenes in our homes. This is on the Christmas cards that we give and receive. This is on some of the television specials that we watch, and in the songs that we sing.

So this year, I wanted to look at the opening few chapters of Matthew. And one thing that's curious is that every year, Christmas is celebrated but the investigation of Matthew's account ends at Matthew 2:12. Mary, Joseph, baby, and then the assumption is they lived happily ever after. Today we're gonna pick up the story in the next verse. We're gonna look at what happened to Jesus as a young child.

So if you would, find Matthew 2:13–23 as we look at the fact of "Why Life Is Hard for Jesus' People." And then we're gonna read it, and then we'll unpack it in succession. Some of you have never heard this part of the story. You're like, "What, Jesus didn't live happily ever after?" Here's what happened to him as a baby.

Chapter 2 verse 13 of Matthew, "Now when they had departed," that's Mary and Joseph and Jesus, "behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child,'" that's Jesus, "'and his mother,'" that's Mary, "'and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod,'" he's the king, "'is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'" "And he," that's Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, "rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill—"

Make note of that word, Mars Hill. You're going to see it three times in this section. We're going to come back to it in a little bit, but it's a very important word, "fulfill." "To fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet," quotes Hosea 11:1 written seven hundred years before Jesus was born. God knows the future, God rules over the future, and God reveals the future through the prophets. And so seven hundred years prior, a promise, a prophecy had been made, and Matthew is saying here that it's fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

"'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'" 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. Then was fulfilled," there's our word again, "what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah." He quotes Jeremiah 31:15 written about six hundred years before Jesus was born, showing that the entire Old Testament was foreshadowing the coming of Jesus who is the fulfillment of Scripture.

Quotes Jeremiah, "'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.'" But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 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.' And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod," a very evil man, "he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled," again there's our word, "he shall be called a Nazarene."

### HEROD: A KING AND A KILLER

There's the story. Let's start with Herod. We see two things regarding Herod: that he is a king and he's a killer. He's a king and he's a killer. It says, in Matthew 2:2, that Jesus was born king. Herod was not born king. He had to fight his way into political leadership. In the Roman government in that time, there were certain areas and each was overseen by a particular leader.

Herod did something unusual and declared himself to be king, like some of you, you've declared yourself to be king over your life, your business, your family. You've got some oversight area, maybe it's just you, but you're king. You're the highest authority. You're the boss. You're in charge. No one can tell you what to do. It's all about you. Herod declared himself to be king of the Jews, because he ruled over this area that had a high concentration of Jewish people, God's old covenant church.

And Herod was always protecting his throne. He was a man who was shaped by this title of king. When he declared himself to be king, he was establishing for himself an identity. Our next big series is going to be sixteen weeks on our identity in Christ. But here we see with Herod, he defined himself as king. That was his identity.

And so much of life is spent creating and then defending an identity. And what we see is if your identity is in anything other than “God made me and Jesus saved me,” your identity is wrongly placed, and it’s doomed for destruction, and devastation, and discouragement, and despair, and distress. So, if your identity is in your beauty, getting older will be a crisis. If your identity is in your relationship, then relationship strain or severing becomes a crisis. If your identity is in your health, and your strength, and your vigor, then sickness or age will be a crisis. If your identity is in a dating relationship, then a breakup is not just painful, it’s identity shattering.

Herod’s identity was king. Anyone who would even question his kingship was in danger of losing their life. He would regularly kill his political opponents and their families so as to strike terror in the hearts of the citizens. Don’t even question Herod, not only will he harm you, he’ll kill your family. He was a tyrant of a man. He was very effective though. He’s also regarded as Herod the Great. He brought peace and prosperity. Just goes to show that you can be successful, wealthy, and evil, and that we need to be careful, even in the selection of political leaders, that it can’t always be about the economics, and it can’t always be about our own comfort and safety.

Herod was a man who succeeded in bringing comfort, safety, peace, and prosperity. He also was an evil man, so evil that he killed three of his own sons. He was fearful that they might take his throne so he killed his own three sons. I can’t emotionally even fathom—I’ve got three sons. I’ve got Zac, I’ve got Calvin, I’ve got Gideon. The thought of me murdering my own sons—he murdered one of his sons shortly before he, himself, died. A father is to be willing to die for his sons, not take the life of his sons. But if you’re king and it’s all about your kingship, then any threat to the throne must be annihilated, even if they have your last name. He also murdered his favorite wife. He had multiple wives, but he murdered his favorite wife.

## THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

So we know that Herod is a king and a killer. And here we read of a mass murder. We see that Jesus was born, wise men come from the east, we learn in the previous section. They arrive looking for Jesus. So they go to the place where they assume that a king would be born, the palace. Jesus is not there, he’s in Bethlehem. Herod hears that one has been born king so he asked the wise men, “Go investigate and if you find him tell me for I too would like to worship him,” which is a lie.

The Bible scholars convene, they tell the wise men from the east, Micah 5:2 predicted hundreds of years ago that the King would be born in Bethlehem, and so they venture to Bethlehem. They do not travel the same way home because God warns them, “Herod’s an evil man. You’re in danger.” So they return home after visiting Jesus as a baby.

And now Herod is uncertain exactly where Jesus is living. He does know that Jesus must be two years of age or younger based upon the timing of the visit of the magi so he sends forth a decree to murder all of the sons two years of age and younger living in and around the city of Bethlehem. And . . . and little boys die. The parents are devastated, and funerals are held, and in some of your Bibles this subsection is called, “The Slaughter of the Innocents.” And with the recent mass murder in Connecticut, one of the first news stories that I read—and I’ve been reading everything I can because I’m so devastated, disturbed, frustrated, horrified, as a father of five children, as a pastor to three thousand children. One of the first news stories I read the headline out of Connecticut was, “The Slaughter of the Innocents.”

I know nothing about the reporter but they were connecting Matthew 2 where we find ourselves in God’s providence and a mass murder in Connecticut. In the days of—and I tell you this for this reason, sometimes we can read history and because it’s not current, and it’s not people we know, it’s not faces that we’ve seen, we can lack the Father heart of God that is devastated and grieving. But in the season we find ourselves, there’s national mourning. The same mood that we’re experiencing is the same mood they were experiencing, the same conversations they were having, the same grief they were expressing.

What we do know is that in Connecticut twenty children between the ages of six and seven were murdered, as well as six teachers, all women who had educated themselves and took, essentially, lower-paying jobs because they loved children. I want to say thank you to the teachers, thank you to the nursery workers, thank you to all who love and serve children.

And it was all done by one man. Well, the slaughter of the innocents in the days of Jesus was similar. Like Connecticut, it was a small town. Bethlehem was, the archaeologists tell us and I’ve been there, in that day, maybe a thousand people plus a few more in the outlying area. And all the commentators that I’ve read say that if you were to do basic calculation of population, that perhaps twenty or so young boys were murdered by Herod, about the same number as were murdered by another man in Connecticut.

And invariably what happens then is that people start asking lots of questions, reasonably so. And in our day then, “experts” are brought forth, usually by the media, to speak to those who have questions and are struggling and hurting and grieving. And even those who are not Christian will start to act in ways that are church-like. People will gather together. They’ll sing whatever spiritual songs they can recall. They’ll talk to one another and light candles as a form of prayer and weep together. And then questions get raised like, “Is the president coming?” like the pastoral father figure, to bring peace and comfort to the hurting. It’s very curious. When things go bad, we all want to go to church.

And then the experts are brought forth to answer the questions. And I have nothing against the social sciences, psychology, sociology, they can be very helpful. I tend to read pretty extensively in those areas, but you won’t really get an answer until you delve into theology. What happens is they’ll start going back and saying, “Well, what was this person’s upbringing, and what was their family like? And what kind of cultural conditioning did they experience?”

The problem is it doesn’t go back far enough into the family tree. It doesn’t go all the way back to Adam and Eve. We’re not good people. We’re sinners by nature and choice. The Bible alone gives us the right insight to understand what’s wrong with the world, and what’s wrong with us. We’re not all good people. From our first parents forward, we inherit a sin nature. It’s where Psalm 51 says we’re conceived in sin, and we’re sinful from our mother’s womb. But the human heart is deceitful and wicked, Jeremiah tells us, that when the Bible speaks of sin, it does so with terms like “evil” and “madness.” When our depraved nature is untethered, we’re capable of horrific things.

Friends, that’s why we need a new nature. It’s why we need not just be born, we need be born again. That’s why we need not simply have Adam as our father, we need to have God as our Father. And so Jesus comes to save us from sin, to save us from death, to save us from ourselves.

And I want you to see that behind all of this, the Bible and its theological insights also tells us that the battles we face are not merely flesh and blood but behind the curtain are powers, principalities, and spirits. We believe in Satan, we believe in demons. We believe that God is the author of life, and that Satan is the opposer of life. We believe that anytime we see an

attack on human beings, particularly women and children, particularly innocent women and children, particularly from a man, he is to blame but Satan is involved, and demons are included.

It's an atrocity. It's an injustice. It's an evil. I'm a father. I'm a husband. I'm a pastor. The thought of a man harming a woman, killing a child, killing a woman, I don't know about you, emotionally, it's very disorienting for me, and once they put the photos of the six- and seven-year-old children online and I saw the faces of the children, it went from twenty in number to twenty in face, and it's haunting. So the way we feel is the way they felt in the days of Jesus.

But the answers can only come theologically, that something has gone terribly wrong with this world, and that people are sinners and capable of great evil. And when human nature is unrestrained—yes, there may be psychological contributions or medical or hormonal or chemical or environmental or family of origins contributions, at the end of the day, when Satan empowers and compels the unrestrained depravity of human nature, horror is not only possible, it is certain.

## **INNOCENT LIFE IS TAKEN ALL THE TIME**

We should all grieve when innocent life is taken. And innocent life is taken all the time. If what is required to be a killer like Herod is to kill an innocent child, there are a lot of Herods walking around. We live in a day that is profoundly confused about children.

See, we know that there is no difference between a child that is in a mother's womb and a child that is in a mother's arms. We know that both equally bear the image and likeness of God, both have dignity, value, and worth. The Bible tells us that John the Baptizer was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Jeremiah says that he was chosen from his mother's womb. It's a good thing there wasn't a Planned Parenthood in Bethlehem, Mary being single, and young, and poor, and uneducated, and pregnant.

The horror, the outrage, the grief for the twenty should be for all, all innocents who have been slaughtered. We live in a profoundly conflicted day. I was thinking about that recently, Prince William and his wife, Kate, are pregnant and Britain rejoices. I wonder if there would be a response if they now had an abortion because they're young, or perhaps the child had Down Syndrome, or it wasn't a good season for them. Children are not more valuable because they come from royal blood. All children, all men and women, bear the image and likeness of God. Particular dignity, value, worth, and respect is bestowed on human life above animal life.

I'm glad that the royal couple is pregnant and I rejoice when anybody at Mars Hill comes up to me and says, "I gotta tell ya something." And I can tell by the look on their face, it's good news, a child is coming. But this royal baby will be born into the nation of Britain where the number-one cause of death is abortion. A nation is celebrating the conception of a child that they hope will rise up to lead a nation that kills its children, and that is now the leading cause of death in that nation, and in that collection of nations because that statistic includes royals. We live in a day that is profoundly confused about human life and the dignity of human life.

For those of you that have had an abortion, or those of you men who have encouraged an abortion, or driven a woman to an abortion, or funded an abortion, or impregnated a woman with no intention of raising that child and thereby contributing to abortion, you're a Herod, you're a murderer. You've murdered a child. You've murdered a child.

Whatever anger you have toward the events in Connecticut is, to be consistent and not hypocritical, the same kind of anger you should have for yourself. If you ask questions like, "How could he do that?" you need to also ask, "How could I do that?" If you ask questions like, "Why would he do that?" you've gotta ask, "Why did I do that?" If you ask a question like, "Who kills a child?" you have to also ask, "Why have I killed a child, my child?"

Some of you say, "It's not illegal." Dear friend, it wasn't illegal for Herod either. Mars Hill Church, we're pro-life. We've always been pro-life, and by the grace of God, we'll always be pro-life. Some of you say, "I disagree." You don't disagree with me. You disagree with the God who made you in his image and likeness. What we're talking about is the number of human beings who get to live. There is so little that is equal in importance to that.

Some of you say, "I thought Mars Hill was not political." It's not. It's radically biblical and where politics gets in the way of theology, we proceed forward without apologizing. This is not a Democrat/Republican issue. This is a life/death issue. This is not a pro-life/pro-choice question. This is a pro-God/anti-God question. I am so joyful that we have children in Mars Hill. I'm so joyful anytime a child is born.

Now for those of you who are murderers, don't argue, don't give excuses, don't give reasons. See, that's what Herod does. I have good news for you. Herod was trying to murder Jesus and, again, it is a spiritual battle. Herod's family descends from a man named Esau who was a brother to a man named Jacob, and they had a real conflict. It's always been two kingdoms colliding.

The reason Herod was ultimately trying to kill Jesus was Satan knew, here is Immanuel, God with us, coming to save sinners, and he knew that he needed to kill Jesus before he could preach, and teach, and perform miracles, and cast out demons, and evidence himself to be God. But Jesus' life was spared. Jesus says it elsewhere, "No one could take my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord." Jesus wasn't going to die at the hands of Herod as a baby. He was going to lay down his own life later.

And let me say this about the death of the Lord Jesus, particularly to those of you who are murderers. He says something from the cross to those who are murdering him. He says, "Father, forgive them." So here's the truth, Jesus is God who becomes a man, goes to the cross and dies without sin in our place for our sins that we might be forgiven of anything and everything, including murder of those who are innocent. And no one is more innocent than Jesus, and he forgave those who murdered him.

So if you're here today and you say, "Okay, I'm a murderer," yes, and Jesus died for your forgiveness, and he loves you, and no one is beyond the grace of God. And I would just encourage you, I would beg you not to defend yourself, not to deny your sin, not to diminish your sin. To right now, insofar as Herod called himself king, call yourself murderer, and then let Jesus call you forgiven. He didn't just die, he rose. He conquered sin and death, and he's alive to forgive you right now.

For those of you who have not murdered but you think in a murderous way—pro-choice is such a cute title for pro-murder. I understand. Previous to my meeting Jesus, I thought just like you. I grew up in a pro-life Catholic family and totally disagreed. I took evolution to its logical conclusion. Some people are more fit, others less so. The fit survive. Those who are poor, those who are disabled or handicapped in any way, those who have diminished mental capacities, those who can't make as much of a contribution to the earth as wonderful people like myself, should die.

So I was not just pro-choice, I was pro-abortion. I studied the teachings at a fairly young age of Malthus, Malthusian eugenicist. Malthus posited that certain races and peoples and groups should die. I didn't agree to the racial part. I looked at it more socially. Those who are poor, those who are uneducated, those who are unhealthy, they need to die because they're a drain on the rest of us.

I argued this position in high school, quite effectively, as student body president, even in debates. I went to college and I studied some more, and I actually remember winning a debate in a very large philosophy class, hundreds of students, dismantling the Christian publicly on these issues.

And then Jesus saved me, and all of a sudden, Romans 12, "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Next thing I know I'm reading the Bible. Oh, we're all made in the image and likeness of God. We all have dignity, value, and worth. Jesus was poor, not rich. His parents probably were not educated. They were rural.

I love you and I just want you to love people that are not like you, not just people who are. And it's interesting because when you ask, "Who are those that are less fit?" It's always someone not like me because we tend to worship ourselves. And if we idolize ourselves, we demonize and destroy others and that's what Herod did, and that's what some of us have done.

Now, I've never been complicit in the murder of child, the abortion of a child, but I thought exactly like so many of you think. I invite you to have a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of life. You're thinking like Herod. Some of you have been acting like Herod. There are a lot of Herods walking around.

And it's just such an insane day that we live in. A deacon in the church, he and his wife are pregnant with a child. They have healthy children, praise God, and pregnant, very excited and go to the doctor. The doctor says, "There's a possibility of some sort of birth defect, maybe Down Syndrome, so when would you like to abort the child?" This was very recent. They said, "What, abort the child? We're not gonna abort the child. They have Down Syndrome, they don't have Down Syndrome, they bear the image and likeness of God. We love them. We'll welcome them into our family."

Doctor says, "Oh, there's something wrong with your baby." Oh, there's something more wrong with the doctor. The couple loves Jesus and says, "No, no. Children are a blessing, even those that have special needs. Sometimes they're a special blessing." The doctor say, "Well, I'm gonna go ahead and schedule the abortion anyways, and I'm gonna encourage you to murder your child." Didn't use that language but that's what he meant. They said, "There's no way."

Of course they didn't abort their child but they got a bill for an abortion because the doctor was so certain that they would kill their child that he scheduled it, and when they didn't show up for the abortion they did not want, to the meeting they did not plan, they got the bill for the procedure that they did not do. Right now they're fighting the insurance company saying, "We will not pay for the abortion that we did not show up for because we didn't schedule it because we don't agree with it." The doctor hands them a form and says, "I want you to sign away your right to sue me, saying if the baby is born with a defect, you can't come after me because I warned you."

What a profoundly confused day in which we live. Emotionally, seeing the faces of twenty murdered children plus their six female teachers is devastating, and I want us to have that kind of father's heart for all children and all victims of murder. And I know some of you right now, you are thinking, "I'm going to leave this church." Please stay and change your mind. We're not asking you to leave. We're asking you to change your mind. Again, I've had a change of mind, and I'm asking you to have one with me.

In the grace of God, we've got a baby making noise. Okay, for those of who are parents, when your baby's making noise at Mars Hill, don't feel like you gotta run them out of the room because they're alive and we rejoice in that. Amen? And here comes the Lord Jesus. He's not like Herod. He's not a king who takes life. He's a King who gives his own life.

## **GOD: SOVEREIGN, SUPERNATURAL, SPEAKS, AND SENDS**

Now over and above Herod is God. If all that we had were the human and not the divine perspective, we would only see Herod. We would not see the hand of God. There are four things in this section of Matthew that we learn about the Lord. He's sovereign, supernatural, he speaks, and he sends.

We see here that he is sovereign. Yes, Herod is the king but above him is the Lord. And Herod wants to kill but the Lord wants life. And Herod wants to rule, but ultimately Jesus will rule as King of kings. Over nations, over politicians, over presidents, over kings, over queens, is the Creator God.

Secondly, we see that the God of the Bible is supernatural. We see it repeatedly with Joseph, even in this section. He has a dream and a visit from an angel. At Mars Hill we believe in that. We don't believe it happens all the time, but we believe it happens, that God speaks to, reveals to Joseph. We believe in a supernatural God, a God who can heal, a God who does hear and answer prayer, a God who can speak, and can save, and can lead, and can guide, and can direct. He's supernatural.

And thirdly, he speaks. He's not mute. He's not silent. He speaks to Joseph, speaks to Mary. Sometimes does so through an intermediary like an angel. And a careful reading of an important text I think will be helpful here. God does speak and he speaks through Scripture. I told you that in the reading of this section on three occasions it says, "Fulfill, fulfill, fulfill," and then it goes back and quotes Old Testament prophecy, things like Hosea and Jeremiah.

Why does it do that? Because the Bible is saying in the Old Covenant, the Old Testament, the prophet spoke on God's behalf, and Matthew is saying, "Now it's all being fulfilled in Jesus." This tells you a lot about the Scriptures, the Word of God. The Old Testament is about Jesus, the New Testament is about the fulfillment in Jesus, and all of the Bible is about Jesus.

I'll show it to you from Matthew 2:15, there he quotes Hosea 11:1 written hundreds of years prior, actually seven hundred years prior. Here's what Matthew says. Matthew 2:15, the who? Read it carefully, Mars Hill. "The Lord had spoken by the prophet . . ." Here's what Matthew's saying: it was Hosea's voice but the Lord's words. We call that divine inspiration. Hosea's voice, the Lord's words. This is why we call the Scriptures the Word of God. We believe this is the Word of God. It may have Matthew's voice, it may have Paul's voice, it may have Peter's voice, it may have Isaiah's voice, it may have Moses' voice, but it's the Lord's words.

This is the perfect Word of the Lord. It's the only thing on earth that is perfect. It's the Word of the Lord. And it's interesting here, I love how he says it, the Lord spoke through the prophet. This means, Mars Hill, we don't edit Scripture. We don't ignore parts of Scripture. We don't try and update parts of Scripture. We accept the whole Word of God as the Word

of God, not just a word about God. Amen?

And I just—I would say, pray for me. Man, I get into some serious media firefights and sit in the hot seat under the lights. And they're like push, push, push, "Can you please edit, change?" No, no. God needs messengers, not editors.

Ours is a God who's sovereign, supernaturally speaks, and he sends. He sends. He sends an angel to Mary. He sends an angel in a dream to Joseph. He sends them from Nazareth to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Egypt, from Egypt back to Nazareth. He's sending them. He sent you, he sent me. Wherever you find yourself is where the Lord has sent you. And you may be there for a long time or a short time, but you're there because that's where the Lord has sent you if you're one of his people.

## **JESUS: THE GREATER MOSES, ISRAEL, KING, AND EXODUS**

Well, what about the Lord Jesus? Four things we learn here about the Lord Jesus: he's the greater Moses, the greater Israel, the greater King, and he provides the greater Exodus. First he's the greater Moses. The story here in Matthew has echoes and intimations of the life of Moses. The life of Moses, many years prior, was one where, like Jesus, a ruler, at that time it was Pharaoh, put a death sentence forth to kill the children, and both were under a death sentence but both were spared, and both, for a season, lived in Egypt. And both had the hand of the Lord upon them, and both were raised up by God to lead a deliverance of God's people. Moses, that they might leave the rule of Pharaoh and be free to worship God, Jesus as the God to be worshiped who delivers us from Pharaohs like sin, and Satan, and death. Jesus is the greater Moses.

Number two, Jesus is the greater Israel. When they would read the Old Covenant Old Testament sections of Scripture, the Jews would read the parts about God having a Son, which is a position where you get the family name, and inheritance, and title and it includes men and women but in that day, legally and culturally, it was a privileged position. They'd say, "Oh, that's about us," and here we learn ultimately Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is the one in the favored, blessed position. Jesus is the big brother. It quotes in Matthew 2:15, Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt, I have called my Son." Jesus is the Son of God.

Number three, he is the greater King. Again, I've said it multiple times in this sermon, but when the magi, the wise men, come to worship Jesus, they say in Matthew 2:2, "Where is the one born King?" Herod was never born king. He was never fit for the title of king. You and I should never be king. Some of you say, "I'm only king of my life." It's still far too much. Jesus is a greater King.

And number four, he provides a greater Exodus. The connection is that Moses led God's people out of Egypt, and Jesus leads us out of death, hell, sin, the wrath of God. Jesus provides a greater Exodus, not just for this life, but forever. So he is, he is the hero.

## **JESUS' PEOPLE: DIFFICULTIES, DUTIES, AND DELIGHTS**

We learn three things about Jesus' people, and Jesus' people here in Matthew are Mary and Joseph. They're the ones with Jesus. If I could make it as simple as possible, to be a Christian is to just be with Jesus. You're with Jesus. Mary and Joseph are Jesus' people. They're with Jesus. He's their parents—or rather, they're his parents but he's their Lord. We learn three things about what it means to be Jesus' people: difficulties, duties, and delights.

Difficulties, to say the least, was Mary and Joseph's life easier or harder once Jesus arrived? Harder. Let me be clear. I can't promise you that if you stick close to Jesus you're gonna get rich. You may be poor like them. I can't promise you that life will be simple. It might get complex like theirs. I can't promise you that your suffering will go away. It might intensify as theirs did. We don't come to Jesus to use him for an easier life. We come to Jesus for eternal life, which is a quality of life that begins now, and a duration of life that lasts forever.

They had difficulties, not the least of which was all the moving. I mean, you just look at the difficulties. They're probably teenagers. They're poor. Joseph's trying, as a carpenter, to make ends meet to feed his family. Any of you men feel that? Just feeding your family is hard enough. Imagine you keep moving, unannounced, to a different country in the middle of the night. It's difficult. Everybody's gonna think that your wife is a tramp. Your son is gonna have all kinds of confusion because he's Immanuel, God with us.

Now, go from Nazareth to Bethlehem with your pregnant wife so Micah 5:2 can be fulfilled, and he can be born in Bethlehem. Oh, they're trying to kill him. Complicated. Who is? The king. "Well, who do I call?" Can't call the police. You can't call the military because it's the king who's trying to kill your son. Move to Egypt, they're in Egypt for a while. Move to Nazareth, moved to Nazareth for a while.

It's difficult because everything for Jesus is hard. Everything for Jesus is hard. If you're gonna be with Jesus and do what's right for Jesus, it's gonna be hard. It's gonna be hard in ministry. It's gonna be hard in business. It's gonna be hard in families. It's gonna be hard in relationships. It's gonna be hard financially, emotionally, spiritually, mentally hard. You know why? Because there's resistance. You know why there's resistance? Because Satan hates Jesus, and he makes life hard for all the people who are close to Jesus. There are a lot of difficulties. That's the story of Mary and Joseph.

In addition to the difficulties, there are duties. One of the things I love about Joseph is his simple obedience. He doesn't say much. We don't get any indication that he felt much, he just does much. Some people feel a lot, say a lot, don't do a lot. Joseph doesn't say anything. I don't know if you've seen that. He's definitely the strong silent type.

All it says is, "An angel came to him in a dream and told him in the middle of the night to grab his wife and baby and move to another country and he did." "Well, how did he feel about that?" We don't know. "What did he say?" I don't know. "Mary, please get up." That's—maybe he said that. We don't know what he said.

Some of you men have a wrong portrait of what it means to be a godly man. Some of you are called to teach as I am. We're all called to obey, and if you'll trust the Lord and obey, that's maturity. Some of you say, "I don't—sometimes I don't know what to say." Joseph doesn't say anything. Sometimes that's the best thing to say. We don't know what he felt. We don't know what he said. We know what he did. "Give your life to Mary as her husband." "Okay." "Go to Bethlehem." "Okay." "Go to Egypt." "Okay." "Go back to Nazareth." "Okay."

And I love that his obedience was immediate. Careful reading in the text says that he went at night. You know what that meant? He had a dream, an angel showed up. He wakes up middle of the night, "Mary, grab Jesus, we're leaving." And I love the fact that Mary goes with him, okay? Ladies, ladies, you see that? She goes with him. She doesn't, you know, jump on Facebook, "My husband got a dream from an angel that we're supposed to walk to Canada right now. So pray for the drug test. The police are on the way." You know, I mean

it doesn't—right?

He walks so closely with the Lord that the Lord can speak to him as head of household, and when he explains it to his wife she says, “Well, I trust you and I trust the Lord. Let me get Jesus. We'll walk now.” What are they walking away from? Well, every time they move, they're leaving his job, they're leaving their possessions, family, friends, comfort, security. They don't have time to pack. They don't have time to move. They don't have time to make a plan. They don't know where they're gonna live in the next country. For those of you who are organized, this is faith, right? This is faith. But they obey.

I'm glad that they didn't stay and argue because Jesus might have died. Sometimes when the Lord says, “Do this, don't do that,” it's because he loves us and he knows what's going to happen, and he's trying to get us to move quickly for our safety. Praise God that sometimes he answers our prayers no. “Can I stay?” “No.” “Can I go?” “Not yet” or “no.” See, a good parent, a mother or father, knows that if you always say yes, you don't love your child. Amen? Because they're going to ask for things that are not in their best interest or it leads to danger.

Some of you have been asking God for things. I don't know about Mary and Joseph, maybe they wanted to stay somewhere. Maybe they wanted to settle down. Maybe they were tired of all of the chaos and the death sentence on their Son but when God moves them, he moves them because he loves them and he moves them so that his love might protect them. So it is for us. Don't question the goodness of God. Trust, trust the goodness of God and obey the commands of God. That's the dutiful picture of Mary and Joseph.

And then there are delights. So to be Jesus' people is difficulties, duties, and delights. Here's what Mary and Joseph don't have: stellar reputations. Here's what they don't have: economic certainty. Here's what they don't have: all of their possessions. Here's what they don't have: close proximity to their family and friends. Here's what they don't have: certainty about what the future holds. Here's what they do have: Jesus. They have Jesus. Do you have Jesus? Do you have Jesus? If you do, you have everything. And if you don't, you have nothing.

Father God, I thank you that I get to teach the Word, preach the Word. I love what I get to do. God, I thank you that in your providence, the slaughter of the innocents in the book of Matthew is in the season of national and international mourning. Holy Spirit, I repent of not trusting you when you said to teach through the first few chapters of Matthew. This section didn't make any sense. I didn't want to teach this one. It seemed like such a downer for a Christmas series, and it seemed like it didn't fit. Holy Spirit, thank you for compelling me to put it on the list and put it on the net and agree to teach it. Even though I didn't know the future, you did and that timeless Word proves to be so timely. Lord Jesus, I pray for our people that they would love the Scriptures, and study the Scriptures, and trust the Scriptures, and know that what they're studying today is probably a fitting Word for tomorrow. They just don't know what tomorrow holds, but you do.

Lord Jesus, I pray for those of us who are murderers, that we would not live under guilt, and condemnation, and accusation, and shame, for there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. I pray that they would hear the echo of the words of the Lord Jesus from the cross, “Forgiven,” and “It is finished.” Lord God, I thank you that, though I can't prove it biblically, I trust it practically, children who don't make it out of the womb, including the one that Grace and I miscarried, they go into the Father's arms forever and one day we will see them again.

Lord God, I pray for those who think like murderers. They've got philosophical reasons, and psychological reasons, and social reasons, and medical reasons, and personal reasons, and they're being very unreasonable. I pray, Lord God, that they would come to repentance, that they would come to Jesus, that they would come to a new heart and a new mind. I pray they would not feel like they need a new church. I pray that they would see that they need to come to a new understanding.

Lord God, for those like Herod, we rejoice that though he did not get justice in this life, he got justice at the end of this life. Lord Jesus, he . . . he's judged by you. Holy Spirit, I thank you for showing me that right now, that Herod stood before the resurrected Jesus, and gave an account for his life and his family. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are no longer a babe in a manger, but you're God on a throne. And Lord, we know that though some things are legal, like Herod's slaughter of the innocents or our nation's slaughter of the innocents through abortion, that there is ultimately another court, and another King, and another judge, and another sentencing.

So Lord Jesus, as we repent of our sin and fight for justice on this earth, we thank you that ultimately everything will forever be settled in your presence. Until then, give us joy, and give us hope, and give us peace. Let us celebrate at the birth of every child. Let us fight the injustice against any child. And Lord Jesus, for those of us who are parents and grandparents, when we hold our kids, may we hold them tight, and kiss them long and say, “Thank you, Lord.” In Jesus' name, amen.

*Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.*