

Good News of Great Joy

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 2.13-23

Prepared by Paul White, using N.T.
Wright's For Everyone Bible Study Guide
of Matthew

I. Connecting With One Another

What were your favorite Christmas traditions growing up? What are they now?

II. Introduction to this Study

Jesus, the Savior of the world has been born into humble obscurity in the town of Bethlehem. But to certain people there is something already dangerous about this innocent child. Even as a child Jesus is a threat. This passage is a travelogue to Egypt and back; filled with dreams, angels, and the loving-kindness of Almighty God.

III. Questions for Discussion and Reflection

- a. Read Matthew 2.1-12. Herod the great had no royal blood, and was not even fully Jewish, but was simply an opportunistic military commander whom the Romans made into a king to further their own Middle Eastern agendas. Why is Herod so disturbed by what the Magi tell him?
- b. Read Matthew 2.13-23. What were the results of Herod's political power and ambition being threatened?
- c. At the heart of the Christmas story in Matthew's Gospel is a baby who poses such a threat to the most powerful man around that he kills a whole village full of other babies in order to try to get rid of him. Jesus is born with a price on his head; a price that will be ultimately paid on the cross.

In what ways do you see God at work throughout Matthew 2?

- d. Jesus was born in a land and at a time of trouble, tension, violence and fear. Banish all thoughts of peaceful Christmas scenes. Before he had fully learned to walk and talk the Prince of Peace was a homeless refugee! At the same time, Matthew insists that we see Jesus, even when things are at their darkest, the fulfillment of Scripture. This is how Israel's redeemer was to appear; this is how God would set about liberating his people and bringing justice to the whole world. If he is to be Emmanuel, God-with-us, he must be where the pain is.

What comes to your mind when you think of "where the pain is" in your community, in your family, in your church, in the world?

- e. Read Isaiah 63.7-9. The word that the NIV translates as "kindness" in verse 7, is the Hebrew word *chesed* (pronounced "HESS-ed"). *Chesed* is comparable to the New Testament word, "grace." It refers to the faithfulness of Yahweh to the covenant he made with his people. *Chesed* embraces the kindness and goodness of God to his people through the ages.

How do you see God's *chesed* at work in Matthew 2.13-23? How do you see it in your life?

IV. Pray

- a. Reflect on the "kindness of the LORD" and the "deeds for which he is to be praised" in your life. Spend some time giving thanks to God for his *chesed* in your life.
- b. Who do you know that needs to experience God's *chesed*? Pray for God to use you and others to bring that into those lives..