

13 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.”

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, **15** 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.”

16 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. **17** Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 “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.”

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20** 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.”

21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. **22** But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea 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, **23** 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.

A Moving Moment

Last Wednesday we had a moving moment. We helped Pastor Loescher move. It was a moving moment because we loaded up boxes onto a truck that is stored behind the church. But it was moving moment in the sense that the sober reality finally hit home - they're really leaving us for the winter wonderland of Wisconsin. We will miss him. He's moving and it's moving.

In a way we too have just been through a number of moving moments. Christmas is still in the air, our tree still smells amazing, but then the 1st Sunday after Christmas doesn't exactly make it into the Charlie Brown Christmas Special. This is a feast that isn't celebrated but rather observed and it's called the Slaughter of the Innocents. It's a moving moment - that moves us in more of a revolting gut wrenching way. The Slaughter of the Innocents surrounds Christmas with the stench of death as the scent of iron fills the air instead of an evergreen tree. Because of this moving moment Joseph and Mary have to move and quickly (like Pastor Loescher) from the Promised Land to Egypt.

Christmas isn't a moving moment where everyone lives happily ever and the truth is, that's reality. We will all get older and die. In the meantime we live in a corrupt world, politicians, greed, injustice, and that may lead us to question if God has moved on without us. Does he even care? God hasn't moved on rather he moved in.

But Christmas looked so promising and peaceful. Joseph and Mary have a child. They lay him in a manger. On the 8th day the baby is circumcised and given the name, "Jesus." Joseph takes this child as his own. After 40 days Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple and offer the poorest offering available. They may even have returned to Nazareth setup and settled down. When out of no-where Magi - (people like sorcerers) show up from the East, led by a star to their location bearing expensive gifts. Later, Joseph is jolted awake by an angel in a dream. A moving moment led to them moving to Egypt. *"Get up and take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you."*

All because there was a coward as king. Herod the Great ruled at this time. This is not the same Herod Jesus would later stand before - that was this man's grandson. This Herod did everything he could in order to protect his identity as King. He claimed to be king and he was king but then he hears news of, *"one who had been born king of the Jews."* Herod would do anything to defend that status from the one who is born King of the Jews even if that involved killing a child. This wouldn't be the first time he's killed. Caesar Augustus, a close friend of Herod said, *"I'd rather be Herod's pig than his son."* Herod

killed his favorite wife, his uncle, mother-in-law, and near the end of his life his three sons. His method for dealing with threats to his throne was death. So when Magi came asking for another king *Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:3)*

Far from being a moving moment, so touching, Jesus was born in a manger. He wasn't isolated and given every benefit being the Son of God. He had to flee for his life. The path Jesus moved through this life was full of God's promise but also human resistance.

We may wonder, "Why would God allow such a thing to happen?" Where was he? That's no different from today. Some say, "2016 was the worst year to date." Think of the terror attacks - Orlando, Dallas, Nice, Brussels and the list could continue on and on. The slaughter of the innocents and the horrible massacres that we are experiencing is nothing new.

One could even defend Herod's actions because at least in his situation it was a surgical strike aimed at children under the age of 2. Moreover we make Herod look like a saint when we as a nation have slaughtered 59 million children since Roe v. Wade first took effect. (Please don't call us a Christian Nation. Our government and our nation should not represent us. They do a terrible job.)

Abortion is just one way we act like Herod. We act like Herod whenever we try to protect and defend our self-proclaimed status from any form of change, just like Herod we want to protect our self-proclaimed status, our identity that we have carved out for our comfort in this world. In other words - *we don't want to move*. We may not move to murder but we may become defensive, run down others, shift blame, all while building up the image we want people to see. People are moved when it is suggested that they are something they think they are not.

We are often offended when we realize these moving moments of sin that sicken us is part of living in a fallen world. That our sin is the cause. That if God did something about it God would have to destroy us as well. We are sinners in need of a savior. No matter how much we fight for an identity that is our own and different or better than others we still get what we've earned: death. There is no moving on. But rather than moving on without us and letting this world go to waste. God moved in.

That's the amazing thing about Christmas. It's not that man became God but God became man. God in Christ identifies with us. He came into a world wrecked by sin and he didn't move to a secure suburb with a gated community where there wouldn't be any problems but he identified with those driven from home by terror and violence.

But he fled before the slaughter? What about the children? That was a tragic loss. Matthew admits by quoting - Jeremiah, *"A Sound in Ramah was heard, weeping and much mourning, Rachel lamenting her children; and she was not willing to be comforted because they are not."* Rachel is mourning over her children - Israel. They are being carried off into captivity. Ramah is supposedly the staging location for deportation. Matthew compares the horrors of Bethlehem with the weeping of women as they watched their children carried off into exile.

The reason they are being carried off is because of their failure to live as God's children. If you read the rest of the chapter it's a chapter of promise, a remnant will return and in spite of human plans, and the evil of this world be it deportation or the slaughter of innocent children God is at work. The failure of Israel to live as God's son meant that God would send his son to walk in their shoes and he would start with the Exodus. *"And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"*

Jesus alone is the only innocent, spotless, lamb of God. He realized how wicked this world is. He came to suffer what we deserve. When we wonder, "Why?" We know why. This is what we deserve. But we also know what kind of God we have. A God who is with us in times of grief or loss. We know that nothing that happened to Jesus was beyond his control and unable to be used by God for our Good. even in the darkest of times God is with us. Promising not only to move with us but to also move us from death to life so that we might know that joy of life in Christ.

God uses the most unlikely events and the most unlikely people - even pagan sorcerers - Magi. He redeems us too. That's why we confess, "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing come to him..." But God has called me by the Gospel and given us more than a chapter of promise. He's given us many moving moments.

So why does sin seem to rule? He wants us to see that there really is a problem with this world. He wants us to look forward to moving home. He want us to rejoice in what he has done just like the Magi. Our king has come and he does everything to demonstrate to a world ruined by sin that you are not beyond redemption or without hope.

God has not moved on without you and that's moving. Pastor Loescher is moving but he's not gone. He's not dead to us. He's off to the frozen tundra of the Mid-west. It's a moving moment and we already miss him. But we'll see him again. We will see even

more who have already moved on from this life to the next. God is with us every step of the way.