

The 2nd Sunday after Christmas
Matthew 2:13-23
January 2–3, 2010

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A voice is heard in Bethlehem. It is Rachel weeping for her children. She says, “**They are no more.**” Herod took their lives in his vain attempt to cast a net big enough to catch God. But God escaped in the night. He was exiled to Egypt, the land of slavery and infanticide. Meanwhile the women of Bethlehem had their boys snatched from their arms. *Why didn't God warn their husbands as He had Joseph?* That is why Rachel refuses comfort. She is mad at God.

God says: “**Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded. Do not say, ‘They are no more.’ for they are with Me.**” *Why would Rachel refuse that?* Because sometimes the sons and daughters of Eve selfishly indulge their sadness and depression. We lack the discipline and charity required to get on with life. We enjoy complaining and drawing attention to ourselves and bask in the illusion that we are worthy of pity. We have all of the emotional maturity of a 2-year old throwing a tantrum. We smash the television because Bambi's mother dies and we refuse to watch anymore. Repent.

God has given you many good things. He sustains you in them still. *Will you dare to refuse the comfort He gives? Will you turn your back on wife, child, and neighbor for vanity and pride? Are these things, these relationships, people, and vocations, that God has provided not enough? Must you insist on your own way and be driven by lust and ego to the pit of death? Do you really think you can see for*

yourself what is good for food, pleasing to the eye, and capable of making one wise? Repent. Turn back. Stop this foolish ego trip. Your tantrums and delusional sadness destroy those who love you. Your anger at God, your anger at yourself, is misplaced.

Be comforted by God in your sorrow. He promises Rachel: **“Your children shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future. Your children shall come back to their own border.”**

It is true also for you. Do not mourn as those who have no hope. What God takes away, God restores. **“Your children shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future. Your children shall come back to their own border.”** Yes, there is sadness now. Your mourning is just. You are a victim in many ways. And our sins, both the things we do wrong and the sin we have inherited from Adam, have awful consequences. David loses the son by Bathsheba. Stephen is stoned by those he loves. But we do not mourn as those who have no hope. We have hope. Jesus Christ did not stay in Egypt. He came out of the land of slavery. He crossed the Jordan with the sign of the Dove and the opening of heaven. He went to the cross. He rose from the dead.

Thus you have hope. Your God is not the god of the dead. Abraham lives. So do Moses, Elijah, Malachi, and Zacchaeus. So do the boys from Bethlehem slaughtered while Jesus escaped in the night. They live because Jesus lives. They have come back from the land of the enemy. They have been reunited with their mothers. If their mothers endured 50 years of sadness here on earth without them, no small thing, they have now enjoyed 2000 years in perfect union in heaven and are looking forward to eternity. They will never be separated and never be sad again. Thus it is

also written: **“Our present sufferings do not compare to the glory that will be revealed in us.”**

I know you are sad. I know you are hurting. But do not think that the forgiveness of sins you have received, that your Baptism, that God’s promises are insignificant or too small for your problems, sins, and suffering. Do not say, **“What good is it if God loves by my husband or sister or child is gone.”** The forgiveness of sins does yet not remove all your aches and pains, all your sadness, doubts, fears, and selfish desires. Not yet. But you have hope. God is not yet done with you. He will bring it to completion in the Day of Jesus Christ. And thus are you called to live by faith, not by what you see or feel or think, but by every Word that proceeds from the Mouth of God. You are righteous in the sight of God for Jesus’ sake. And you live in the eager expectation of a watchman waiting for the morning. And if it is the case that your mourning causes you to long for the end, to be detached from this world, God be praised. Because the love of money is the root of all evil. Desire to be free of this world and be with your Lord and your loved ones is a good and holy desire. It is hope.

If you drew a line on the map to show the path of the Israelites called out Egypt through the desert on their way to the promised land and stopped even a day short, you’d never be able to tell it was leading to the promised land. They wandered all over the place. Their tracks looked like they were going in every direction except toward the promised land. But God brought them there. The Lord also remembers you. There is no good luck. There is no bad luck. He works all things together for good. He is leading you home.

The boys from Bethlehem died that night that Jesus would escape and return to die for them. His Martyrdom liberated them out of this living death and relieved them early of their burdens. It was not as it may have appeared that their lives were exchanged for His. It was His Life given

in exchange for theirs. They seemed to die, but they really lived. What Herod meant for evil God meant for good. Herod delivered them to heaven, peace, and joy without measure. They praised God not by speaking but by dying. Their lives were emptied of themselves and filled with Him. They had no complaint. It was their mothers who were the victims.

This then is also your Life in Christ. You are the victim, still suffering, still in sadness. Yet the Life Christ lived He lived for you. The death He died He died for you. And the Resurrection to which He rose, He rose for you. And that suffering, dying, and rising now lives in you. Do not mourn, do not live, do not sleep, do not eat, do not move, as those who have no hope. You have hope. Jesus lives. the Kingdom of God is within you. He breaks you, empties you, dies in you, that He might rebuild, fill, and resurrect you. He calls you again out of Egypt and away from Pharaoh's slavery to sin and death. He shows you the way of the cross and the way of Life. If He makes you weak, like a child, then, in Him, only in Him and always in Him, you are strong. Cast your burdens upon Him. He knows your pain. He loves you. Let go of your anger and jealousy. You are only hurting yourself. The Lord forgives you.

The Boys of Bethlehem were not abandoned. You won't be either. There is hope in your future. Jesus loves you.

In +Jesus' Name. Amen.