

The Problem with Christmas
Matthew 2:13-23
Sermon Outline

Introduction: The problem with Christmas for some of us is that Jesus does not seem to have “delivered” as promised.

I) This is not a new problem

For people in Matthew’s day, Jesus did not seem to “fit the part”

- No peace in Bethlehem
- Flight to Egypt
- Raised in the wrong town
- Dead under God’s curse at the hands of the Gentiles

II) Despite appearances, Jesus is the one we are looking for

A) He fulfills prophecy

Bethlehem: (Micah)

Nazareth: *Galilee of the nations (Isaiah 9.1-6)*

Hanging out in unlikely places

B) He completely up-ends the deadly status-quo

Herod’s status quo

Jesus the up-ender

Why does Jesus “reverse rule”?

C) He is God’s ‘do-over’

1) Israel all over again

v. 15: Out of Egypt I called my son (Hosea 11:1)

v. 18: A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. (Jeremiah 31:15)

2) David all over again

v. 23: He shall be called a Nazarene (A “Branchite”—Isaiah 1.1)

D) Meaning for us

Jesus relives our sad story for us, triumphing on our behalf

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Every Christmas we sing Wesley's famous words:

*Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings! Risen with healing in his wings!
Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King!*

If all this praise is true, then why is the world the way it is? After all, if Wesley is to be believed, Jesus has been reigning now for 2000 years.

- 2) Why does it make such sense, prophetically speaking, that Jesus should have grown up in Nazareth, rather than Bethlehem (See Genesis 12:1-3 and Isaiah 9:1-7)?
- 3) We can all think of people who we consider are unlikely 'targets' of God's interest and love (perhaps you consider yourself such a person). By sending his Son to spend his youth and early adulthood in a tiny town in "Galilee of the Gentiles" (rather than a more 'likely' place--like of Bethlehem and Jerusalem), God was telling us that there are no unlikely targets of his interest and love. How might you adjust your thinking and behavior in the light of this?
- 4) Reflect on the following: "We complain that Jesus did not answer Herod's violence with violence—killing him before he killed the children of Bethlehem. But if Jesus were to establish his Peace by answering violence with violence, none of us would be beneficiaries of his reign, for we are all (in our own ways) violent. God knows this, and so he came to serve and die—to bear sin rather than to punish it, to give rather than to take."
- 5) Matthew's citations from the OT in v. 15, v. 18, and v. 23 seem all to be aimed at making the same point: Jesus is God's 'do-over'. He is the 'Second Israel' coming to relive, as Israel and for Israel, the mission she has failed at and to bear, as Israel and for Israel, the curse she ought to bear for her failure. And he is the "Second David" to establish his long-promised everlasting and world-wide kingdom. Why the need for a 'do-over'?
- 6) Reflect on the Bible's teaching that Jesus is the Second Adam. What this means is that he is our 'do-over': By him God came fully into our humanity to 're-do human life' in our place—living the life of love and faith that we should live but do not, and then dying the death for our sin that we deserve so that we can escape punishment. When the NT tells believers (as it does repeatedly) that they are 'in Christ', this is what it means. All that Christ is and has done becomes our own possession through union with him. Thank God for what he has done.