



12/26/25

This year is definitely not the Christmas we would have planned for or hoped for. We spent Christmas Eve and Christmas Day visiting Tim's mom in her hospital room. But as I look at the story of Jesus' birth and the surrounding circumstances, what blows me away is that it IS the Christmas God planned. It was a tough situation! And this Christmas is no surprise to Him. He made it beautiful in His own way. We had lunch at the hospital cafeteria. They made a special Christmas meal and gave it to everyone for free. The people in the hospital were so cheerful and nice. One of the specialists had Tim in "man tears" as she told him she was praying for him and that she could tell how much he cares for his mom. We found a place to eat dinner on a day when almost no one is open. I was very thankful that we didn't have to eat gas station food. Hahaha. It was not the Christmas we had planned, but our faithful Father knew exactly how to take care of us and His mom through it.

I have to share one more story... My sister had asked me for a simple way to lead a friend to Christ. Her friend wanted to know Jesus. So I told her about the ABC's... admit, believe, confess Jesus as Lord. That was at least a month ago. On Christmas Day, my sister shared a text with me from that friend who gave her life to Jesus. Part of her text said, "This morning I woke up alone in my house, without someone or anyone to share the spirit of Christmas with and having the sudden feeling of being alone, and yet at the same time, how completely not alone I was now that I am a believer. I started to pray this morning and it has given me a whole new understanding and meaning to Christmas that is filled with so much more love and appreciation." Brought me to tears. Another story of a Christmas that wouldn't have been the plan... and yet God showed up. What a beautiful story of how God cares for each individual soul.

I hope and pray that whatever your Christmas has looked like, you have experienced the truth of God's faithfulness and love.

*Merry, Blessings,
Jonna*

Hosea 11:1, Exodus 3:9-10, Matthew 2:13-21

I wonder what the Israelites thought when they would read Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Did they think it was a look back to Exodus 3, when God spoke to Moses from a burning bush telling Moses that He had heard the cry of His people? Did they think this was looking back at how God told Moses to go to Pharaoh as the voice of God and say, "Let My people go"? Or did the readers know... Hosea was looking ahead to the Messiah, and God's deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was a foreshadowing of a greater, eternal deliverance. The Promised Land foreshadowed was not a land on earth, but a new heaven and new earth where those who are delivered will dwell with God forever, restoring what was broken in the Garden of Eden because of man's rebellion.

In Matthew 2, I see this foreshadowing of Hosea 11:1 fulfilled, with the final fulfillment of the Heavenly Promised Land still to come.

I see God's sovereignty, knowledge, and protection in Matthew 2:13-15. God is in control of the whole plan. He had been able to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem as prophesied over 700 years before they arrived. And now, He was going to get them to Egypt with their Son and His. How? Through the evil intent of a self absorbed ruler, Herod.

The wise men had just left... and not gone back to Herod to tell him where Jesus was because they were warned in a dream that his intentions were evil. Now God had an angel speak to Joseph in a dream. He told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt because Herod was about to "search for the child and destroy Him." Joseph did not waste any time. He woke up, got Mary and Jesus, and left for Egypt in the middle of the night. Hence... God gets Jesus to Egypt so that the prophecy can be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt, I called My Son."

About that time, Herod realized that the wise men were not coming back to tell him where Jesus was. He was furious! He had been "tricked" by the wise men. Ummm... but Herod, weren't you the one who just tried to trick them? So this wasn't about right and wrong. This was about you not getting what you wanted. Herod was the poster child for the "self rule" heart. He thought he had all authority and control, but God is greater.

Herod was so mad that he had been duped that he ordered all the male children two years and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding area, the suburbs, to be killed. Based on the wise men's calculations, Jesus had to be no more than two years old. Even this was a fulfillment of prophecy from Jeremiah 31:15... "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." Wow. This is prophecy no one would want to see fulfilled.

Here's how evil Satan is... He KNEW Jesus wasn't there. Herod may not have known, but HE knew. He had all those babies slaughtered anyway. But what Satan means for evil, God means for good. Does that mean God calls this good? No way. God is grieved over the death of these children, and over the devastation for their families. Even when something is very bad, God is able to work something very good through it.

Satan's goal was to destroy and probably to turn people against the Lord. He was so blinded by hatred, as is true to his nature, that he didn't even realize he was fulfilling God's prophecy. Or maybe he's so filled with hate that he didn't care. He just wanted to cause pain.

Whatever Satan's plan, he didn't win. And he didn't stop God. As soon as Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in yet another dream and told him the coast was clear. Take Mary and Jesus back to Israel. And he did.

What do I learn from this passage? Overall, I see that the Christmas story is not a fairy tale at all. Jesus' whole life was filled with brokenness... way worse than mine. At the same time, the Christmas story truly is a genuine story of hope... and power. No opposition can stop God from carrying out His plan. And His plan saved me, not just from the slavery the Israelites experienced in Egypt, but from the domain of darkness where slavery is forever.

I see in Joseph a man who knew how to wait on God's leading, and to act on God's leading as well. In the same way Mary said to Gabriel, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me according to Your word," Joseph exemplified that same heart. His whole life was flipped upside down from what he thought it would be... and he trusted God and surrendered his plan to God's plan completely. He had the privilege of protecting the Savior of the world.

God has been showing me two things that I need to embrace, and I see these things in Joseph. 1. I need to continually have the attitude of, "Not my will, but Yours be done." In all honesty, as I'm beginning to say this to the Lord, I'm realizing how much I DON'T live it. 2. Like Joseph, I'm on a need to know basis. And I have to be good with that. The only way I can be is if I trust the One who does know. God knew what Herod was going to do before Herod knew what he was going to do. God already had a plan. And He fulfilled that plan. I would bet that He also comforted the hearts and souls of those moms and dads who lost their baby boys, because that's His heart. In Mark 9:42 Jesus said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." If He felt that way about causing a child to sin, just think of how much worse it is for someone who takes the life of that child.

So, my prayer is that God will help me to learn not just to say but to live "Not my will, but Yours be done," and "I'm on a need to know basis." The thing is, God TRAINS me to have this mindset. He doesn't just hand it to me on a silver platter. It's only been a few days since I solidified this prayer, and He's already shown me how much I try to take control. I am acutely aware of how many of my thoughts start with, "I want." This is going to be a painful training plan. But I know, as Hebrews 12:11 says, it will "yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Then there's what I see about God. He truly is sovereign. As He says in Isaiah 46:8-9, He declares the end from the beginning, and His purpose stands. I also have the promise from Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He has made everything beautiful in its time," and Isaiah 61:3, "He gives

beauty for ashes." He does not call all things good, but He is able in all His wisdom and power to make all things good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

I also see His love and care. If God didn't so love the world, none of this plan would have happened. He created. Man broke fellowship with Him. He knew someone had to pay an enormous price in order to reconcile our relationship with Him. And so He sent His Son, and His Son willingly gave His life. He knew that Satan wanted to crush this plan. He knew that a plan with such hatred from the devil would be opposed at every turn. He allowed it to only go so far. Satan has always been on a leash, and he will be until he's put in his forever prison.

God has all power and all love for His people. He is intimately involved in every aspect of our lives. He leads with gentleness and care. But His gentle leading should never be mistaken as weakness. He is still on His throne and He always will be. His will be done... His will is good... His will is the way of peace, hope, and joy... and undying love.

O Lord, I say, "Not my will but Yours be done" as though I have power to decide. The truth is, Your will absolutely will be done... and I need to get on Your plan. The more I cooperate with You, the more I get to experience Your peaceful fruit of righteousness. I'm in. Thank You. Who else could offer such a perfect, loving, impenetrable plan?