

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

First Sunday after Christmas – December 28, 2025

“¹³Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ ¹⁶Then Herod sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.”

- Matthew 2:13, 16 -

Mark Twain once wrote, “A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other; age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ...those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. It (the release) comes at last—the only un-poisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence...a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever.” That’s how Twain spoke about matters of life and death.

Here you have a man who had so many blessings in his life. He was an accomplished author. He traveled the world. He entertained people with his speaking engagements and enjoyed using humor. He had a lovely wife and to that union they bore four children. But life wasn’t all roses for Twain. He and his wife lost their first-born son Langdon at the age of 19 months to diphtheria. Later Twain developed a deep depression that began shortly after his daughter Susy died at the age of 14 from meningitis. He lost his beloved wife Olivia in 1904 and then just three years later, on Christmas Eve, Twain’s second daughter Jean died at the age of 29. It was in 1906 that Mark Twain began writing his autobiography. And so, Twain’s view of life and death might make more sense to us now, knowing that he was in a very dark place himself. Yes, he had much to be thankful for, but death wasn’t foreign to the man, either. Mark Twain’s depression worsened as he aged closer to his death in 1910.

We’d prefer not to talk about death—especially this time of year: Christmas. It’s the season to be jolly, full of joy, and celebrating. And yet, here we have this reading from Luke, chapter 2 that records the time in history when Jesus was just a toddler. King Herod was so angry and felt so threatened, he ordered that every first-born male under the age of two be executed. This story, just three days after Christmas, leaves us feeling shocked and heartbroken. We know of this kind of horror in the present day. We hear stories of innocent people being killed, and it seems hopeless. But all is not lost, even amid evil. We have hope in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel (God with us). Jesus brings life out of death, murder, and bloodshed. Sadly, evil still exists, but one day God will silence evil once and for all. Jesus came among us, and we’ve celebrated his birth. God protected Jesus by warning his parents to take him away to Egypt, where Herod couldn’t reach him. But about 30 years later, Jesus would be faced with the cross, where he would die a criminal’s death. And then three days later, God would raise him from the dead. Jesus brings life out of death. Evil will continue to exist. People will continue to suffer and die. But we know that’s not the end of the story. One day, God will silence evil and suffering forever.