



## **Matthew 2:16-18**

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.”

Yesterday we saw God’s Messiah, his anointed one, the rightful king of the Jews, flee with his parents to Egypt as a homeless refugee with a price on his head. A mad Roman king’s plotting to kill him, Jerusalem’s turned their back on him, and foreign nations have come from afar to worship him and help him escape – all before Jesus could even walk or talk. And in our passage today King Herod is furious. He’s been duped by the Magi who’d been warned of Herod’s intentions in a dream and he’s furious. So true to form, for an increasingly paranoid despot who’d already killed his wife and two of his own sons, Herod commits an atrocity.

You know I find it hard to even read these vers-

es. When I read these verses I see in them the face of my son Joel who has only just turned three. His innocence, his utter dependence, the trust he places even in strangers, his happiness and joy at every new experience, his energy, the way he's so full of life, the prospects of a whole life ahead of him... And when I imagine the slaughter of between 10 and 30 toddlers, from the small town of Bethlehem, with somewhere between 300 and 1000 people, I can't help but go there to mourn with them in my mind. Most of the mums would have known each other, given birth around the same time, they're young boys playing together. Many babies and mums would have died in childbirth, these mum's and these babies hadn't. When I think of the mothers' screams and the looks in their eyes, and the dads who were probably killed or injured trying to save their sons, or the other dads

who live in shame for the rest of their lives for being cowards and not doing something. When I think of all of this, I feel physically ill.

Such an act of evil, a wicked, wicked king, abusing his power, taking the life of innocents in a fit of rage ... and it makes me feel sick at the injustice of it. And then I start thinking of how this type of evil is playing itself out again and again down through centuries, and with a 7 billion people in the world today, probably never more so than today. The injustice of it, the powerlessness of the victims, a wicked evil king abusing his power.

And then I think of another king. A king who loved little children, in a time in history when very few others did. I think of a king who parents would run to when their children were sick, and he'd make them well. I think of lit-

tle Talitha, and what her parents must think of this king. I think of a king who cares so much about justice that he's called the righteousness of God, a king with power like the world has never seen, a king who would NEVER abuse his power. A king who will one day bring justice, not just for acts like this, but for every single thing that's ever been done wrong, every thought word and deed of every single person who has ever walked this earth, judged with perfect justice. A king who would NEVER abuse his power, who came to champion little children, widows, the elderly, the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed. A king who would NEVER abuse his power who didn't need to come to earth and be born in a palace. A king who preferred to walk amongst us as the least of us. Who showed his authority not by his soldiers but by his words and deeds. The king who is wor-

shipped as God 2000 years later by billions of people all around the world on the strength of these words and deeds and the way he backed them up by dying for his people on a Roman cross, dying so that his people might be saved.

And then I think of a God who knows what it is like to lose a son. A God who knows exactly how those mothers felt and exactly how you feel if you've lost a child. A God who sent his precious, one and only son to die, so that atrocities like this might come to an end and that every evil ever committed in this world might be held to account.

That's our King and that's our God and that is what they are doing to bring an end to atrocities like this one. Will you follow them? Will you join their mission in this world? What might this look like for you today? Can you

bring comfort to Rachel today? Can you bring Jesus to Rachel today? Following in Jesus' footsteps, what can you do in your life to bring comfort and Christ to those people in our world who are experiencing injustice like this today? There's so much to think and pray about. Please take some time to do so now.

And you'll be happy to hear tomorrow that Herod dies, and like us all, one day soon he will stand before the judgement seat of Christ. But unlike us, Jesus won't be for him, he'll be against him. Thanks for reading, and I look forward to picking this up again with you tomorrow.

