

DECEMBER 29, 2019
FIRST SUNDAY
OF CHRISTMAS



The coming of Christ triggers hostility.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

Sunday	Matthew 2:13-23	The escape to Egypt
Monday	Isaiah 63:7-9	God's mercy remembered
Tuesday	Matthew 25:31-46	The great judgment
Wednesday	Psalms 103:1-5	Thanksgiving for God's goodness
Thursday	Hebrews 2:10-18	Jesus the high priest
Friday	Exodus 1:15-2:10	Moses is born to a slave people
Saturday	Psalms 148	Let all things praise the Lord
Sunday	John 1:1-18	The Word became flesh

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more. **Matthew 2:18 (NRSV)**

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:

Dear merciful God, bring your comfort and protection to all who experience violence and suffering, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

We thank you for this food; may all who hunger be blessed with the food you give. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, lift you up and carry you all the days of your life. (Isaiah 63:9)



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HYMN OF THE WEEK

*O Little Town of
Bethlehem*



WEEKLY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- Tell or think about a time when you or someone you know needed to be protected or comforted.
- How can you be a responsible member of the church and society in the face of ongoing violence in our nation and world?
- Why is the shocking slaughter of the children described in Matthew 2 an important part of the Christmas story?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Matthew 2:13-23.

Christmas time is a wonderful opportunity to sing Christmas hymns, see beautiful lights and contemplate peace on earth. However, Matthew 2 brings us back to the daily fears and violence that continues around us. Innocent children are slaughtered because a king fears for his power. The slaughter of innocent children continues to this day. The holy family flees to a land that once enslaved God's people, yet there the family is protected. People seek protection today as refugees in historic numbers. Christ's birth is powerful because sin and death remain realities. Christ's birth brings violence from those who fear God's design and rule. The life of the church is the life of faithful and courageous opposition to all powers that are an affront to the salvation of God in Christ. In the midst of unfairness and violence, in what ways can Christians respond with truth and peace? How does the message of Christ's birth and return from Egypt give you courage to live each day as a child of God?

Pray: **O, Holy Jesus, your path of love and salvation brings hope to a world that needs saving. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

A refugee is one who leaves their country because they encounter danger in their lives. Herod wanted to destroy Jesus. For this reason, Jesus' family fled to Egypt and became refugees. When refugees enter a new country, they are in need of compassion and care. There are many Christian organizations providing food, language lessons, and housing for refugees. Become familiar with refugee needs and take action through prayer and donations to support them.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

In Psalm 148 we read the word "praise" twelve times. All twelve times the praise is for God: for all of creation, for rulers of the earth, and for women and men of all ages. Make a list of things to praise God for: from friends and family, to trees and birds, and to everyone you meet. The list can be endless. Set aside a quiet time each day to reflect on your list and praise God by praying your list out loud.



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org