

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ December 18, 2011



GOD CAME NEAR

“When God Says No”

Matthew 2:13-23

This week’s study is going to take you down before it brings you back up.

Most presentations of the Christmas story focus on the baby in the manger, the shepherds, the star in the east, and the wise men. It’s usually a happy, peaceful scene. But the truth is, the birth of Jesus Christ was attended with sorrow and danger.

As you will see, someone wanted to end the life of the Savior almost as soon as it began. But the adversity Jesus experienced only made him more qualified to be our faithful High Priest.

Because of the affliction Jesus went through as a baby, you can know that he is with you when you suffer.



KNOWING GOD

Read Matthew 2:13-23. The birth of Jesus Christ was a joyous occasion, but it came with a “dark side.” Satan did not just roll over and play dead when Jesus entered time and space. Why did King Herod kill the baby boys of Bethlehem (vs. 16)?

Several Old Testament sayings are used by Matthew in this week’s reading. The first (vs. 15) is **Hosea 11:1**. What was God doing by taking Jesus and his parents to Egypt?

The next quotation from the Old Testament is Jeremiah 31:15. Read **Jeremiah 31:15-20**. Even though there was extreme sadness in Bethlehem over the death of these infants, how was there also reason for hope?



GROWING TOGETHER

When has God told you “no”? How did it feel?

How does it comfort you that Jesus experienced scorn and rejection from the very moment of his birth?



SERVING OTHERS

What do you suppose it meant for Jesus to wear the label “Nazarene” for much of his life on earth? (see John 1:45-46)

This week’s passage shows the important role empathy played in the ministry of Jesus. What did Jesus learn from the experiences recounted in this week’s passage that made him a complete Savior?

How empathetic are you? What steps might you take to grow in empathy toward the sorrows of others?



IN YOUR FAMILY...

- a) Discuss: If you had the power to change one thing about how Americans celebrate Christmas, what would you do?
- b) This passage shows that God builds hope through suffering. Share with your family how the sufferings you have experienced this year have developed perseverance, character, and hope.
- c) Whom do you know that needs a fresh supply of joy? What might your family do this Christmas season to bring joy to that person or persons?

SERMON NOTES