



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*New Beginnings*

Part I

Daily Scripture Readings for  
June 1 - 28

Our world is waking up again. We had to shut everything down for a while to protect each other, but now we are in a moment of a new beginning. It feels as if we are beginning a new chapter of society. It's exciting, intriguing, and yes, a little nerve-racking. This is a great moment to begin again. You don't have to go back to the status quo. Over the next seven weeks, we will be reading about different moments where God's people (from Israel to today) began a new chapter in their relationship with God. We will be looking at how they interacted with God, and what that can mean for how we relate to God. Let's WAKE UP and begin again!

Your Pastor,

Josh Breslaw

## **NEW BEGINNINGS WEEK 1: WAKING UP IN THE PROMISED LAND**

### **Monday, June 1 - Joshua 3:1-6**

This week's new beginning is as Israel finally crosses the Jordan River and enters the Promised Land. Can you imagine? After 40 years and an entire generation dying in the desert, Israel is finally reaching their promised destination. Their journey began by miraculously crossing the Red Sea; this new chapter will begin with another miraculous crossing of the Jordan River. In the passage tomorrow, you will read that the river was at flood stage, meaning this was not a small creek that Israel could easily walk across. It took a miracle of God for the journey to move forward.

Because it took a miracle, Joshua tells the people to "sanctify themselves." God is going to do a great thing in their midst, so they better prepare themselves and be spiritually clean. Joshua 7 follows the same order after Israel fails at the Battle of Ai.

Israel must sanctify themselves because God will come before them the next day. This also happens in Numbers 11:18, Job 1:5, Genesis 35:2-3, and Exodus 19:10-11. In every circumstance, the people must make themselves clean. They must devote themselves to God alone, set themselves apart, consecrate themselves, so that God can do amazing wonders among them.

The order of events is made apparent in these verses. Before God can do amazing work in the sight of God's people, God's people ready themselves by completely devoting themselves to God. These are verses that should strike your heart. These verses are not conditions of becoming God's people. Israel is already God's chosen people. This principle of "sanctifying yourself" is not saying you must clean up your act to follow Jesus. It does not say you must do this and that to be loved by God.

No, this is a message to God's people. That if we want to see God in action, we must have hearts which are clean. God will not work in our sight unless we are following the will of God. Unless we are ready for God to work, we will not see God at work. Do you want to see God working in your life? In our life as a church? Ask for forgiveness from God for sin that you have in your life. Ask for forgiveness from others who you have wronged. Devote your life to God first. If we want God to move among us and through us, we must be wholly devoted to God alone.

## **Tuesday, June 2 - Joshua 3:7-17**

In Joshua 3-4, there is a strong emphasis on the Ark of the Covenant going before the nation of Israel. The Ark was considered the presence of God on the earth. It was the power of God in the world. It went before the people into the river. Being in front of the people is a sign that God is encountering Israel's problems before Israel does. God is fighting their battles. The presence of God was protecting God's people.

How does that work now? The Ark of the Covenant has been lost to history. But God's presence in the world no longer rests in the ark. Those days ended when the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus' death ushered in a new presence of God on this earth. Another new beginning. We will talk in much more detail about this new beginning in several weeks, but when the Holy Spirit descends on the church at Pentecost (Acts 2), it is the presence of God on this earth. That Holy Spirit lives inside of all of God's people today, going before us and fighting all of our battles.

We have a powerful weapon of battle living inside of us, if we are followers of Jesus. Sadly, we do not use it. The presence and power of God resides in God's people, yet we are content to let that presence just be "fire-insurance" from Hell when we die. That is not how I want to live life. God wants to fight your battles. God wants to take care of you. Are you going to let him or are you content with wasting the presence of God inside of you?

### **Wednesday, June 3 - 2 Samuel 13-14**

Father's Day is coming up soon. Don't expect David to win any Father of the Year awards. In the two chapters we read for Bible Study tonight, we will see a family in turmoil. Frankly, it is my opinion that David deserves a lot of the blame for everything occurring because it is his inaction which leads to the continued family strife. If last week's debacle with Bathsheba was a turning point in David's life, then these events in 2 Sam 13-14 are the start of the decline in his moral, godly leadership of Israel. Let's talk more about the complicated nature of David's life tonight at 6:30 on Facebook.

### **Thursday, June 4 - Joshua 4:1-14**

When you have new beginnings, you must leave room to tell the story. In the second verse of the 18th century hymn, *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, Robert

Robinson writes: *Here I raise my Ebenezer; Hither by Thy help I'm come. And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home.* An Ebenezer is a marker you place, usually to remember an event with divine assistance. Israel sets up twelve stones to remember what God has done. They set up an Ebenezer. They set up twelve stones to show their children what God had done. In many of our English translations, the question that the children ask in verse 6 is “What do those stones mean *to you*? (emphasis added).” I think this is a perfect description of what faith should be.

Yes, the stones are set up to remind the people of what God has done by cutting off the waters of the Jordan River. That is a fact which must be part of the story. But each Israelite is going to have a different interpretation of that event. Age, status among the people, tribe of which they are part will all influence how they saw this miraculous event.

When our children ask us about faith, they aren't interested in an academic answer. They are interested in what it means *to you*. How has your faith influenced your life? How have you seen God moving in your life? There are non-negotiables of the faith of following Jesus and that will be part of every Christian's story; however, our age, ethnicity, gender, role in life, etc. will influence how we see the story of God moving in our midst.

Maybe the church should do a better job of putting our markers to remember what God has done. Maybe we should have more reminders, so that the next generation asks the question “What does this mean *to you*?” And if the next generation asks, would you be ready to answer?

### **Friday, June 5 - Joshua 4:15-24; Matthew 3:13-17**

As I read this last half of Joshua 4, I couldn't help but be reminded of a different time when the presence of the Lord came out of the Jordan River (see Tuesday's devotional about the Ark of the Covenant). The priests and the ark “come up out of the

Jordan” (v. 16). In Matthew 3:16, Jesus “came up from the water.” A voice from heaven spoke exclaiming that “This is my Son.” Over 1000 years apart, and the presence of God is in the same place.

It gives me reassurance that God has been in this place before. It gives me confidence when I know there are 2000 years of Christians who have gone before us, encountering similar circumstances. And while we may be new to this type of moment, God has been here before. While this is a new chapter in the short story of our life, it is a repeat chapter for God. In Joshua 4 and Matthew 3, God came out of the same river 1000+ years apart. God has been here before; we have not. Let’s lean on God and trust in Him. Pray for God’s leadership in your life. Pray that you will submit to his plan remembering that he has been through similar days while you have not. Pray for humility in knowing that he is God and you are not.

### **Saturday, June 6 - Psalm 114**

Psalm 114 is part of a collection of Psalms read during Jewish Festivals, particularly Passover. Psalm 114 is a psalm that recounts what God has done for Israel and Judah, specifically during the exodus. It is a psalm that reminds the people of what God has done for them. Art, poetry, and song are powerful ways to remember something in the past. It envelopes the body and soul in ways that a history book cannot. The imagery of how God changed nature in order to save Israel reminds us how God is working in our lives to provide for us.

What I want to give you an assignment today. Think about a time when it was truly apparent that God was working on your side. Create a poem, song, or draw a picture of God’s action in your life. Much like these psalms that recount events in Israel’s life, you may use words or pictures that are not literal, but those metaphors explain what God has done. Share with me if you’d like, or let it be something personal

with you and God. Use this as an opportunity to meditate and dwell on the power of God in your life.

### **Sunday, June 7 - Psalm 48:1**

Do you believe that the Lord is great? Praise him with worship this morning!

## **NEW BEGINNINGS WEEK 2 - WAKING UP IN EXILE**

### **Monday, June 8 - Amos 5:1-17**

The next new beginning we will learn from this week is when Israel is taken away from the Promised Land. Exile is a completely new learning experience for God's people. They had understood God as a being who was in a certain place. They must go to God in Jerusalem. They must go up to the Temple to offer their sacrifices. In exile, the people of God learn that God is not bound in human constraints. He is not only in the Temple or only in Israel. God can provide and sustain his people no matter if they can make the right sacrifices on the right days. Notice what parts of verses 4-5 say: "seek me and live; but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing." Amos isn't interested in the people going to the places of worship in Israel. Bethel was a place of worship about 10 miles north of Jerusalem that became a center of idol worship (1 Kings 12:28-33). Gilgal was the place Joshua set up the stones to remember crossing the Jordan in Joshua 4. Beer-sheba is in the southernmost part of Israel and where many biblical events occurred, including Isaac building an altar (Gen. 26:23) and Samuel's sons being judges there (1 Sam. 8:2).

Amos 2:15 explains what seeking God really is: "hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate." The people of God needed to learn and they do learn (sort of) during the exile that God is not interested in certain sacrifices in certain places

at certain times. God cannot be found in only one place. I think these are insights we need to continue to remember as well. God doesn't live at church. God doesn't just want us to sacrifice some money and a few hours each week. God wants everything we do to be centered on him. He doesn't want to be compartmentalized to a certain part of your life; he wants to be Lord of your life on Monday just as much as Sunday. "Seek me and live." Don't seek church or morality. Seek God by hating evil and loving good. How can you seek God this week? Write it down and pray over it. Come back to what you have written every day this week and keep praying that you are seeking the Lord.

### **Tuesday, June 9 - Ezekiel 10:1-19; 11:22-25**

What I would caution you about this passage is do not get bogged down in the details, but keep the big picture in mind. This is a prophetic event where God is removing his presence from Jerusalem. Israel continued in their ways of idolatry, so now God is allowing a foreign nation to send Israel into exile. However, there is still good news in this passage. There is a picture in these verses of God going with the people of Israel. As we discussed yesterday, the people had this understanding of God that he was in a certain place. God is showing Israel that he is going with them.

This is a reassuring moment for the nation of Israel and can be a moment of thankfulness for you and I as we read Ezekiel. Even when we mess up, God is still with us. We cannot mess up bad enough to make God leave us. In fact, potentially taking our similarities to this passage too far, when our mistakes are so great that they affect the people we interact with, God still loves us and will "move on" with us. Thank God today that he is a God who stays with us even when we've abandoned his plan for our life. Thank God that he has given you second chances. Ask God for forgiveness for where you have failed and for strength to get back on the right track.



### **Wednesday, June 10 - 2 Samuel 15-18**

David is on the run again in our study tonight. While he spent the last half of 1 Samuel running from Saul, he now spends several chapters seeking refuge from his son Absalom as Absalom has revolted against David and taken Jerusalem. Admittedly, there is a lot of text to read in these four chapters and we will not be able to cover all of the information tonight. We will take time to focus on the end when David cries tears of grief when his son Absalom dies. Surely we can see these as tears of a father. Grieving the loss of a son who wanted his father dead. Let's cover more of this episode tonight on Facebook.

### **Thursday, June 11 - Daniel 1**

While our first two readings about the Exile this week have been prophetic in nature, Daniel is a writing with people of Israel waking up in Babylon. Daniel 1 sets up the story being in the "third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah" (Dan. 1:1). That would locate the beginning of the story of Daniel about the year 606 B.C. While being in this foreign land, Daniel was part of a reeducation program for three years to become workers in the palace. Daniel did not want to eat the food prescribed to him because it was against dietary restrictions, and it was most assuredly meat that had been sacrificed to Babylonian idols.

You don't need me to tell you the rest of the story. Hopefully, you just read it! What we learn is important. God is not bounded up by imaginary lines on a map. God does not live in Jerusalem or Israel. God is everywhere. Daniel has an interesting life. A devoted man of God, but also one who serves in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar his entire life. Daniel fulfills the message that Jeremiah speaks about seeking the welfare of the city where you live (Jer. 29:7).

One more principle that Daniel lives out better than most people is influencing others while not letting them influence you. Working in a foreign palace for seventy

years is full of temptation. And yet Daniel stays committed to God. He is a good example for all of us. Seek the welfare of the place God has put us, but don't be negatively influenced by that place. It's hard not to take on the traits of the place you live. It would have been easy for Daniel to worship idols like it is easy for us to be selfish and prideful in our world today. It would have been easier for Daniel to eat the king's food much like it is easier for us to worship our money. Nobody would care if Daniel was not pious. Nobody would look down upon Daniel. But that didn't matter to Daniel, and it shouldn't matter to us either. We should be completely devoted to God no matter who is watching and no matter the consequences. Can you say that you are devoted to God like Daniel was? Pray for God to help you make the right decisions and be completely committed to Him.

### **Friday, June 12 - 2 Chronicles 36:15-21**

Second Chronicles is written after the events of the Exile (and Return) have been complete. This allows the chronicler to write how long the exile will be. It's interesting that the description of the 70 years is in order to "make up for its sabbaths." The people had not practiced Sabbath, rest, and now God was forcing that rest to occur. This verse corresponds to a law in Leviticus 26:2, 34. There is punishment for not keeping the Sabbath, even though Jesus later says that the Sabbath was made for man, not the other way around (Mark 2:27).

The way I see this is the writer of Chronicles is making the claim that Israel has disobeyed for 490 years (70 x 7). To make up for the missing sabbaths, it'll take 70 years. Yes, the Sabbath was made for man; however, God made us where we need that rest. Are you taking the appropriate Sabbath rest? It's not just abstaining from work and going to church. Israel was surely doing that. What the prophets of this time period continually focused on was having right relationships with unfortunate people: the poor, widow, orphan, disenfranchised. Israel went through the motions of "church."

They did not live out their faith. Something for us to ponder throughout the days to come: am I taking the appropriate Sabbath rest? Am I living out my faith correctly and resting the way God wants me to rest?

### **Saturday, June 13 - Zephaniah 3:8-13**

Waiting is hard. Maybe it's waiting for something fun like a vacation or family event like a wedding/graduation/birth. Maybe it's waiting for something more sinister like test results or a phone call with bad news. Whether it is in good times or bad times, waiting is hard.

In Zeph. 3:8-13, God calls upon the people of Israel to wait. They are in exile, they have been conquered by Babylon, and God calls upon them to wait. Wait on him to come and rescue them. Wait on him to make their ways right and speech pure again. Wait on him to give them pasture and protection.

Notice as well who can call upon the name of the Lord and who can receive pasture and protection from him. People from Ethiopia (Cush) and Israel. God's love and refuge is available to all people who want it. Do you see what is happening? God started with a family (Abraham) that grew into a nation (Israel). That nation has been scattered, but God is going to bring them home and give them a new beginning. And during this new beginning, the scattered ones will come home and God will give them pure speech. Something greater than a nation is coming. A king and His Kingdom will come and nothing will be the same again.

### **Sunday, June 14 - Psalm 49:15**

God has saved you from death! Let's praise God for that rescue this morning!

## **NEW BEGINNINGS WEEK 3 - BACK HOME AGAIN**

### **Monday, June 15 - Ezra 1:1-4**

God keeps his promises. When the people are being exiled, God gives Jeremiah word that the time away from Judah will last seventy years. And as God promised, in 538 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia issues a decree that all people from Israel may return home. God is a God who keeps his promises.

God is also a God who can use all people to fulfill his purposes. Cyrus is no God-fearer. He does not convert to Judaism. Nevertheless, according to our verse today, the Lord “stirs up” King Cyrus in order to have him issue this edict. God can use all people to fulfill his purposes.

Promises and purposes. How does God want you to fulfill his purposes in life? What does God want you to do today? I don't think this needs to be some grand change in your life. What I am asking is how can you be used by God today? God even used King Cyrus. And in this work that God is asking you to do, he will be with you. This is one of the promises that God gives us. Deuteronomy 31:6 says “...the Lord your God who goes before you; he will not fail you or forsake you.” Hold on to that promise today as you fulfill the purpose God has set before you.

### **Tuesday, June 16 - Haggai 1:1-12**

The people have been allowed to return home because of King Cyrus' edict, and now it is time to rebuild the Temple. Haggai 1:1 gives us the date of this word from God and we can determine that it is August 29, 520 B.C. This makes this word from God about 18 years later than Cyrus allowing the people to return to Jerusalem. There is a condemnation of the people in these words. They have come home, rebuilt their homes, rebuilt society, but have not rebuilt God's house. What we will learn in our

passage on Friday is that the people do rebuild the Temple because of Haggai's word from God.

The Book of Haggai shows the importance of one person following the will of God in his/her life. If Haggai doesn't decide to share the word God gave him, what happens then? We don't know. But what we do know is that on the first day of the sixth month of the second year of King Darius reign, God spoke to Haggai, and Haggai followed through with God's desires from his life. On August 29, 520 B.C., Israel changed forever because one man listened to God.

On June 16, 2020, what is God telling you? What can change for the better because you are listening to God? There are people waiting to follow you. What is God telling you? Take time today to listen in prayer. Wait on God to share with you his plans. And then, when you hear from God, go and tell others.

### **Wednesday, June 17 - 2 Samuel 19-24**

We will be looking through several chapters of 2 Samuel tonight. There are several odds and ends about David that will be covered. He takes several actions in the later years of his reign that may or may not have been the decisions God would have preferred. In our study tonight, we will spend some time reading about David as one who fights adversity, an executioner, militarist, hymnist, and census-taker. Join me tonight on Facebook as we start to study the later years of David's life and conclude 2 Samuel.

### **Thursday, June 18 - Haggai 2:1-9**

Like what we read on Tuesday, another word from the Lord came to Haggai, this time on October 17, 520 B.C. This time Haggai is supposed to speak to all the people, not just the leadership in Jerusalem. There were some people who were disgruntled at the way the new temple looked. They remembered the Temple from before 586 B.C.

and this new one was ugly compared to that one. Haggai implores them to not compare the temples, but have confidence in what God is going to do among the people and in this place.

We get so caught up by comparing what we are doing now and how “it’s nothing like we used to do it.” Sometimes that is very true. Life is not the same. Sometimes that’s good and sometimes it’s not. Instead of being frustrated that the present is worse than the past, have confidence that God is working in the present. Pray a prayer of hope for the present and future. Tell God that you trust Him. Commit to not comparing today to yesterday, but instead focusing on what God is doing and put all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength into letting God work through you today.

### **Friday, June 19 - Nehemiah 8:1-12**

When we jump to Nehemiah for our scripture today, we join a worship service. It is a service of celebration because the new Temple has been completed. Haggai’s words, along with Ezra and Nehemiah, have motivated the people to finish rebuilding the walls and Temple in Jerusalem. Now, the people are celebrating and are listening to Ezra read the law from God. They listened and understood the Law, and this made the people weep. Maybe for the first time in their lives, they realized they were not following the Law.

Why did the people understand the Law for the first time in their lives? Notice verse 7. These 13 Levites went into the crowd and helped the people understand. In order to understand the Bible, we need fellow Christians to come alongside us. This is why Bible Study is so important. We are able to learn from each other what we cannot learn on our own.

Pray for your Sunday Morning Bible Study leaders today. Pray for their preparation this week as they get ready to teach on Sunday. Pray for their health and

the health for their families. Pray for the other members of your class. Pray for good discussion on Sunday, so that you can grow together in your faith.

### **Saturday, June 20 - Malachi 2:10-16**

I hate to end the week on a down note, but this reading today does just that. When we leave Nehemiah, we have hope that Israel's new beginning with the New Temple will be a renewed commitment to following God. Instead we learn from Malachi, which is likely written about 30-40 years after Nehemiah 8, that the people of Israel are worshipping foreign gods again. Faithless is the word that highlights these verses in Malachi. Israel has been faithless in their relationship with God, and Israelite people has been faithless in their marriage relationships. Israel is back to its old ways, not barely 100 years after they were exiled.

The new beginning that Israel received when King Cyrus allowed them to return home did not change much for the people. Israel has not changed. They need a redeemer to come and save them...

### **Sunday, June 21 - Psalm 50:1-6**

Renew your commitment to God this morning. Let's worship God together!

## **NEW BEGINNINGS WEEK 4 - CHRISTMAS IN JUNE**

### **Monday, June 22 - John 1:1-5**

The Word is a peculiar way of describing Christ to us as 21st century English readers, but the original hearers and readers of the Gospel of John would have understood it fairly easily. The Word or *Logos* in Greek meant more than just words on a page. It lent itself to an understanding of wisdom (a god to the Greeks). More than that, it describes Christ as God's main worker in the world. As God's worker in the

world, the Word is part of creation at the beginning and part of redeeming in the present and future.

Why is it important that “he was with God in the beginning?” As we read the Gospel of John, we will learn that John is concerned with telling the people about Jesus as God. The story of Jesus does not begin in a manger or even when an angel comes to tell Mary she is pregnant. The story of Jesus starts “in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Jesus’ story and God’s story are the same. That’s the message John wants to tell in his gospel. This does not mean John will ignore Jesus as man in his gospel, but John portrays Jesus differently than the other three gospels. John wants to make it clear at the beginning of his gospel that Jesus is God and has been God since the beginning of time. Jesus is God. “He was with God in the beginning.”

## **Tuesday, June 23 - John 1:14-18**

It doesn’t have the shepherds, manger, wise men, or Mary and Joseph, but the Prologue of John (1:1-18) ends with the Christmas story. “The Word was with God” (1:1) and now “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...” The word becoming flesh is important for us as we relate to God. God is not some distant being who is just “the Word.” God became human. God can relate to us and understand us because Jesus was human. Not only does God relate to us better, but we are able to relate to God better. Because of Christ coming to earth, we get to see God’s glory. And because of God’s glory, we receive grace upon grace. The glory of God can only be seen in the humanity of Jesus. This is the God who is visible to us because no one has actually seen God. It is only the Son who makes the Father known. The glory of God makes the grace of God available. One of my favorite hymns is “Grace Greater than All Our Sin.” Verse 3 is my favorite:

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
freely bestowed on all who believe:



you that are longing to see his face,  
will you this moment his grace receive?

That theme is what we see in verses 16-17. An overabundance of grace has been given because the Word became flesh. Grace and truth through Christ was given to us to forgive and forget our sin. “The Word became flesh...” Merry Christmas! Relish in God’s glory and grace!

### **Wednesday, June 24 - 1 Kings 1:1-2:12**

We conclude our study of David tonight. Succession plans are continued to put in place in these first chapters of 1 Kings. David’s life and reign over Israel is complete. What has stuck out at you most during this study? Gather your thoughts about David throughout the day and let’s have a great discussion tonight.

### **Thursday, June 25 - Luke 2:22-38**

There is a song written by Christian singer/songwriter Brandon Heath called *He’s Not Finished With Me Yet*. The chorus goes like this:

There is hope for me yet  
Because God won't forget  
All the plans He's made for me  
I'll have to wait and see  
He's not finished with me yet  
He's not finished with me yet

The line “he’s not finished with me yet” is what I think about when I read this story with Simeon and Anna. It is quite striking that when it is time for Jesus to be presented in the Temple, it is two older individuals whose stories intertwine with the baby Savior. Too often, Senior Adults are cast aside from doing the work of the church. Whether it is the choice of those older church members or it is the “forced retirement” from younger members of the church, too often our churches do not hold our senior members in high esteem. This is an egregious wrong which needs to be corrected.

It is my belief that if you are still breathing, then God has a plan for you. He's not finished with you yet. Yes, it is true that your days of manual labor or leading recreation for VBS might be over. But you have so much left to give. Your days of being the body of Christ are not over. He's not finished with you yet.

What is God calling you to do in this season of life? Take time to listen in prayer today, even if you already sense what God is asking you to do. Where is God leading you? What is God asking you to do? How can the church help you in your quest to serve God?

### **Friday, June 26 - Matthew 2:1-12**

The new beginning of Jesus being born changed the whole world. Astrologers (you know them as the Wise Men) noticed something different in the sky over Israel one night, so they began a journey. Their journey did not lead them to a stable as our Nativity scenes portray, but to a house in Bethlehem most likely after Jesus was already one year old.

When Jesus was born, even the sky was changed. That alerted the Magi that something was different. God did something magnificent that spoke the language of the Magi. It led those studiers of stars to seek the origins of that star, and they found the Messiah. The Bible is full of examples of prophets, teachers, and priests speaking to people in a way they could understand (Nehemiah 8:7 and Acts 17:22-23 come to mind). The message stays the same, but the delivery is different.

I don't have to tell you that the message of Jesus Christ has been proclaimed much differently this year than in previous years. Facebook videos and Zoom calls have become just as important as pews and microphones for spreading the message of Christ in 2020. It doesn't make pews and microphones irrelevant or out-dated. It is just the church adjusting to "how can we share the message of Jesus more effectively?" God used angels for the shepherds and stars for the Magi to share the

message of Christmas. How can you speak the language of the people you know in order to preach the gospel to them?

### **Saturday, June 27 - Matthew 2:13-19**

When Jesus was born, it changed the world. Yes, I said this yesterday too; however, today we read a passage where that change brings horrific violence. We should certainly be relieved and thankful that Joseph is warned to escape to Egypt and this young family is saved, but we mourn the other babies who died as well.

On the day that I'm writing this, I was listening to a webinar concerning "God and the Pandemic." The speaker asserted that we do not mourn well. We have lost the practice of lamentation (and on the other side celebration as well). The death of young sons accompanied the birth of the Messiah. The death of first-born sons accompanied Israel escaping Egypt during the Exodus. The death of Jesus brought about the salvation of the world. I think it is appropriate and necessary, in fact, to mourn the violence and death associated with events that also bring about great joy, such as the Christmas story. Let us celebrate that Jesus was saved. Let us also mourn the other children who weren't as fortunate.

### **Sunday, June 28 - Psalm 51:10-12**

There are so many beautiful phrases in these three verses. What stands out to you most? Repeat that phrase over and over as your prayer to God today. And come and worship that God this morning as well!