

Saturday 28th December



*He came to his own people, but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.
These are the God-begotten, not blood-begotten, not flesh-begotten, not sex-begotten.*
[John 1:11–13, The Message]

Another part of the Christmas story that we often overlook is the tale of Herod's reaction to the visit of the Magi. After mistaking the palace as the place to find the new born king, the Magi have alerted Herod to a threat to his power. It is a threat that Herod doesn't want – he's the king, not some long-promised baby born on David's line.

Not everyone wanted Jesus – Herod was just the first in a long line of those who would reject him, try to silence him, harm him and ultimately kill him. But as John reminds us, there was also those who accepted him, those who followed him and still follow him today – they are the children of God.

You'll be hard pushed to find carols of hymns that speak of what Herod did, though there is 'Rachel weeping for her children', by William Chatterton Dix, which speaks of the awful event but also points to the joy to come, a kingdom where there is no mourning or weeping. This may seem a little depressing after the Christmas festivities, but it helps to remind us that fun and festivities won't be everyone's experience of this time of year.

Christmas God,
as we celebrate the Christmas season,
as we give thanks that you came and lived among us,
as we wait for your coming again:
help us to remember those for whom the season is not so jolly;
those who will struggle;
those who are ill;
those who don't even know it is Christmas.
Give us the strength to help them,
to support them with our prayers,
to love them as you love them.
Amen.