

Matthew 2:16-18. the Slaughter of the Babies.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The sermon highlights the cruelty of Herod's actions and the significance of the infants who died in the Savior's stead, offering comfort to believers in the loss of a child.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 12:23, Psalm 127:3, Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:16, Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:13, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12, Revelation 14:3

Topics: "Innocent Suffering", "Eternal Hope"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer reflects on the dreadful cruelty of Herod, who ordered the slaughter of innocent babies in Bethlehem, causing unimaginable anguish to their mothers. Despite the selfish and cruel nature of ungodly men like Herod, the infants who died in place of the Savior are considered martyrs, known as the Innocents. These babies, though sinless in their actions, had a sinful nature and would have eventually sinned. The scene on earth was filled with sorrow, but in heaven, a multitude of happy spirits entered into glory, bringing comfort to grieving parents who can have hope of being reunited with their children in the presence of Christ.

Transcript

Everyone who reads this passage must shudder at the dreadful cruelty of Herod. There was a singular barbarity in ordering the babies to be slaughtered; little creatures who could not have offended him, and were unable to resist him. Who can bear to think of the anguish of the mothers in that terrible day! When the firstborn of Egypt were slain by the destroying angel, the cry was terrible. Can it have been less terrible when the youngest son of many a mother was murdered by the pitiless executioner? We know that the mother's heart clings closely to her helpless infant. Tears and entreaties were all in vain--not only the babies of Bethlehem were slaughtered, but the babies in all the places round about.

We might be disposed to ponder how any human being could perpetrate so atrocious a deed, did not the history of ungodly men disclose every kind of bloody act. This very Herod, just before his death, knowing how glad people would be when he expired, caused a number of Jews to be shut up in prison, and desired that as soon as he was dead they should be killed; for by this means he hoped that the relations of the slaughtered Jews would be obliged to mourn. This command, however, was not obeyed. Such a king as Herod cared not for the lives of infants in comparison to his own security. Though few in a Christian land would dare to commit such acts of cruelty as Herod did, yet are not the feelings of unconverted men as selfish as his? Are we not all by nature so selfish, that we care not what calamities come upon others, if

we gain anything by them? For instance, are not people glad for a war, if it will promote their trade, though they know war brings misery upon thousands of their fellow-creatures?

How interesting was the fate of these infants! they died in the Savior's stead. Some have called them martyrs, because they died for Christ, though without their own knowledge. In the service of the Church of England they are spoken of as the Innocents. A baby may be called "innocent," because it has not yet committed any acts of sin; still it has a sinful nature, and would, if it lived, sin as soon as reason dawned. There never was but one truly innocent baby--it was the infant Savior.

Why is Rachel spoken of in the passage quoted by Jeremiah? Because Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and many of those babies were descended from her. She is represented in a poetical way, as weeping over her murdered offspring.

This was the scene on earth. How different were the scenes then witnessed in heaven! What a multitude of happy spirits then entered together into glory! David was comforted when he lost his little one, by the thoughts of beholding it again. He said to those who wondered at his cheerfulness, knowing, as they did, his affection for his child, "I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me." 2 Sam. 12:23. If David, who lived before the coming of Christ, was supported by this confidence, how much more ought parents who live after his coming to be consoled by such thoughts when they lose their darling infants! Do not they know how Christ loved little children, and how he took them in his arms and blessed them, and how he said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven?" The believing parent may feel assured that he shall see his child again among the cherub choir. Well may he love that Savior to whose grace he owes the happiness of his departed little one.

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