

Why we should preach the innocents

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Truax's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

I've always approached the slaughter of the innocents as a text that demands to be preached whether it's in the lectionary year or not. Maybe that's my privileged life talking there—that is, my life where all my children survived childhood without a serious threat. A life where weddings and baby showers are more frequent than funerals. A life where the stability of a home and regular meals were a given.

It seems particularly important to me to bring to my congregation the terror of a family fleeing their home and the inconsolable grief of parents holding their murdered children. Though it is admittedly jarring to bring these messages into our warmly decorated homes.

But that's the point, isn't it? To arouse a sleepy but well-intentioned flock to see the connections between our lives of relative ease and the 4,600 children who [die every day from preventable diseases](#) (roughly 3 children per minute). To see the relationship between our experience and the experience of the roughly 16,000 Americans who [die violently](#) each year .

Matthew saw a link between the birth of Jesus and the suffering of his people. Jesus was born to liberate, to heal, to comfort and to convict. And along the way, Jesus experienced everything the Israelites had known: from living in exile to food insecurity, from horrific massacres to the miracle of the baby who survives. The Father spares the Son no road to leave untraveled.

Perhaps that's the reason these texts must be preached with everything we have: because most of us don't know these roads that Jesus knew so well. By offering our people a glimpse of what God offered Jesus, we have the possibility of growing a

little bit more like him ourselves.