



Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to the Blue Christmas collection for the Praise Through It podcast.

Christmas is not the most wonderful time of the year for *everyone*. Various life circumstances and happenings can steal the joy of the season right from us. We experience grief, hurt, faintness of heart, and messy spirits.

The good news, though? No matter the state of our hearts? Christmas with Jesus offers grace, healing, faithfulness & mercy.

We bring him grief; He gives us grace.
We bring him hurt; He offers healing.
We bring him faintness of heart; He remains faithful.
We bring him our messy spirits & selves; He extends mercy.

Join me for this four-part series, each episode a snippet of hope, especially if your Christmas is more blue than it is merry & bright.

Listen in for part 1, Grief & Grace

(soft acoustic guitar)

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."

Familiar words for this time of year. I had a hard time not singing them just now; it is one of my very favorites. It was written by a man named Charles Wesley who is credited with writing more

than 6,000 hymns. Can you imagine? 6,000 hymns. That's a lot of creation, and that's a lot of words he had for his savior.

One thing he was particular about was not changing anything. There's a recorded quote of his that I won't repeat here because it is quite fancy, but it basically says: print as you wish, change nothing.

Often, grief exists because there is this thing that we want to be so very different from what it currently is. There is something in our lives we lost and during the grieving process our hearts ask for that thing back. Over and over again, our hearts ask: Please can I have that back? I'll do things differently this time. It's not supposed to be this way. Please, can I have it back?

Grief gives us this lens of wishing things had stayed exactly as they were or exactly as we dreamed them to be, because how things are right now - well, no thank you. I want what I had, or I want what I dreamt of. That was mine. I didn't want anything to change.

Then Christmas rolls around and the sights, sounds and smells of the season incite wave upon wave of wanting the familiar. We want tradition. We want what our heart knew to be true before it was gone. Instead, we experience waves of grief. Waves of wishing we had whatever it is that we lost.

And that's really hard. And it makes us want to hide. It makes us want to run in the opposite direction from the holiday season, not participate, not acknowledge it. Just keep our head down until at least January 2nd, maybe even until all the clearance racks are replaced.

This is where I think we can separate the commercial Christmas from the Jesus Christmas, because in the Jesus Christmas, your grief has a place at the table. The author of *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!* lamented any change to his creation, as we do in the process of our grief. We lament the change and we wonder why, we wonder how we will heal, how we'll keep living with the hole the loss has left in our hearts.

The last verse of Hark! The Herald says this:

Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild he lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

We don't typically sing that verse, but it's as true as the verse we can all sing in our sleep. Christmas with Jesus offers us a chance to sit at his table, which is lit with peace, comfort, and

life. His entire purpose is to give you those gifts. He rose with healing in His wings, the remnants of which remain available to all who call on him.

As we move through this season with the weight of grief on our hearts, Jesus offers us to join the triumph of the skies. God and sinner are reconciled by our savior, Jesus, which means our hearts have the chance to be made whole.

They will not always feel whole while here on earth. Yet for moments here and there, while your heart works to heal, you can call on Jesus to fill in those gaps, cover you with those healing wings, and let him raise your weary soul back to life once again.

It's in that calling, it's in that raising, that your grieving heart may rest in His grace.

Thank you so much for joining me for part one of Blue Christmas. If you want these in your inbox, head to elisapreston.com & you'll see the sign-up right there. For these Blue Christmas installments I'll be releasing one per week, so today and the next three Mondays I'll pop into your Inbox with Hurt & Hope, Mess & Mercy, and Faint and Faith. Don't miss it.

Wishing you a week filled with grace. I'll see you next week.