



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 and hope.

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 2, Hurt & Hope.

Handel's Messiah is played by orchestras all around the world, especially at Christmas time. Its most famous part being the five Hallelujahs in a row, all sung in an octave you don't want me attempting, especially not in a recording meant to still your heart.

George Frideric Handel wrote Handel's Messiah in twenty-three days after going through a dark season of depression in his mind, palsy in his body, and bankruptcy coloring his public persona. He was thought by many to have been completely done composing music.

Then a friend sent him a manuscript that was a collection of scriptural texts, starting with Isaiah 40: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people..." Over the next twenty-three days, Handel took the

words in that manuscript--which was a compilation of various passages from the Bible we know today--and put them to music. What would seem to some a random collection of scripture became the foundation for a hymn that has been in our holiday repertoire for nearly three centuries.

Why?

Because Handel took his hurt and turned it into hope. He was offered the comfort of an omnipotent, omnipresent God and said, "Okay, what can I do with this?" He was hurting deeply, feeling stripped of his identity when interest in his music compositions waned. He was hurt by his family, who didn't support his venture into music. He was hurt physically by the stress of hustling and what could have been a crippling disease.

It may have seemed like he had no room for hope.

Until he met with God, through the words and actions of a friend, and he let that hope burrow so deep inside of him that he had no choice but to create for his Creator once more.

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Until he met with God, through the power of God's promises laid out in scripture, and he let that hope wash over him like a tsunami of the very best kind.

George Frideric Handel regained his fame, but there was no way he could have predicted that outcome when he locked himself away for more than three weeks to pull out of himself the very gift he had once relished in but had since buried. The gift he had let go of when one project after another had failed. He was undoubtedly in a deep and wide place of great hurt and little hope. A place that said: *you'll never feel whole again*. A place that said: *what you have to offer the world is barren now*. A place that said: *there is no hope for you here*.

Yet there was. Because God works overtime for His children, and that means you. That meant George Frideric Handel. That meant Handel receiving the manuscript, believing it, letting himself be inspired by it, and leaning into hope. Leaning into the possibility of hope.

Handel read these words in his friend's manuscript:

He is like a refiner's fire

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, God with us
thy light is come

the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light

rejoice greatly

Come unto Him, all ye that labor, that are heavy laden, and He shall give you rest
His yoke is easy, and His burden is light
The Lord strong and mighty
I know that my Redeemer lives.

When Handel sat with those words, it seems hope took root. It seems hope won out and the world received a lasting, valuable, soul-lifting gift. It seems the hurt was not ignored or dismissed, but rather replaced with and healed with hope.

So today...

May your hurt find a way to lean into hope amidst the holiday sights & sounds.
May your hurt find a place at the holiday table between the lasagna and the salad.
May your hurt bridge to hope with the help of a loving, patient, generous heavenly Father who knows what your heart needs before you do.
May the hurt which burdens your heart be readily handed over to Jesus as you remember that Christmas with Jesus might still hurt, but it'll at least hold some hope, too.
(soft piano music)

Thank you so much for joining me for part two of Blue Christmas. If you want these in your inbox, head to elisapreston.com & you'll see the sign-up right there. I'll be popping into your Inbox and your earbuds with Mess & Mercy next week and Faint & Faith the week after that. Don't miss it.

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