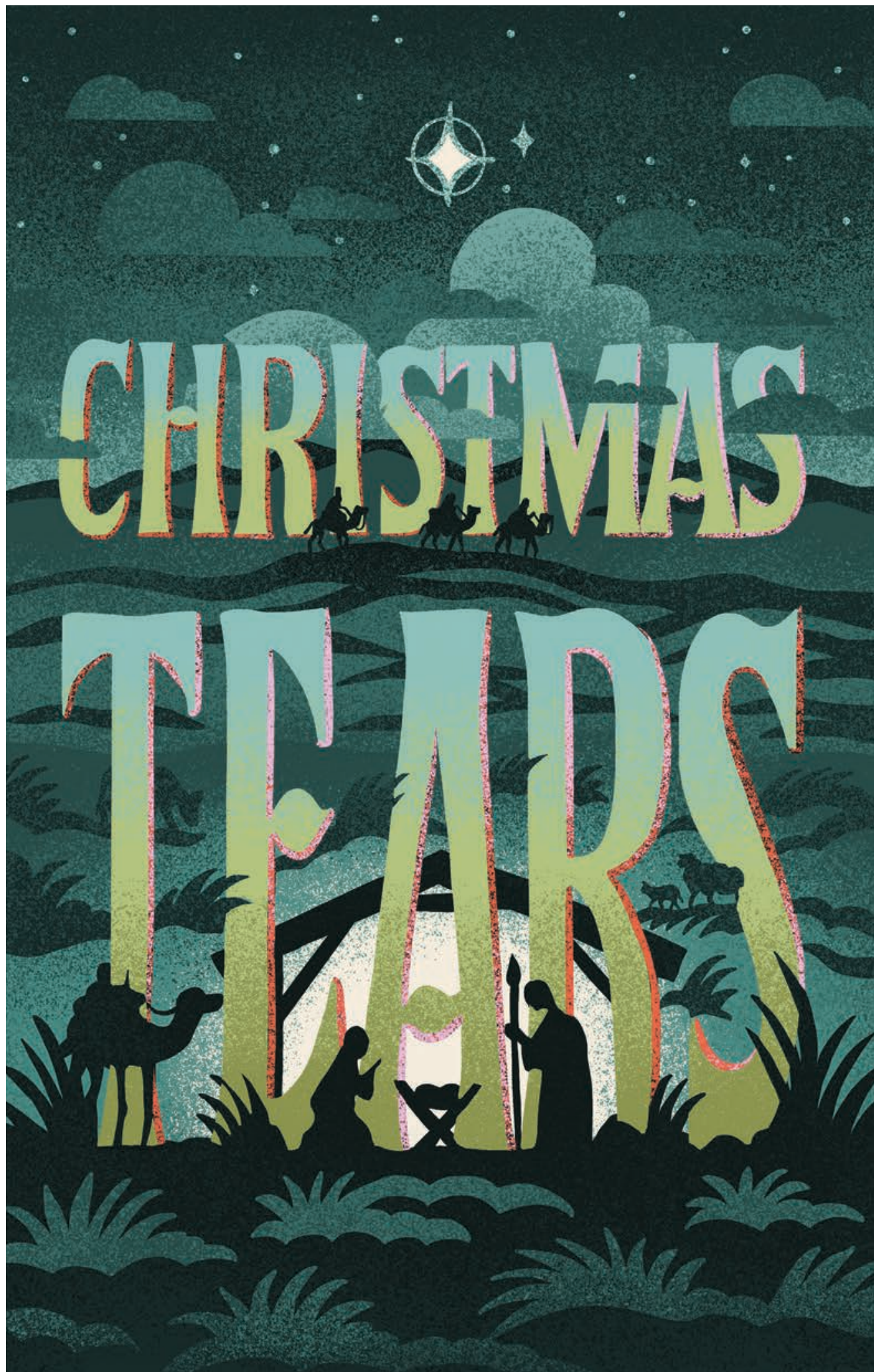


CHRISTMAS

TEARS



W4 | D4
CHRISTMAS DAY

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Nothing represents the mosaic of the human experience quite like the tears of a newborn. Disorientation and discomfort mingle with joy and victory on that little one's cheeks. Soon accompanied by the tears of mother and father, these simple drops of liquid carry all we are and all we hope to be. The infant's cry marks a victory of sorts. New life is here. Hope is here. The little one's future is pregnant with promise. Yet there remains the mother's long road to recovery, the stubbed toes and scraped knees as the toddler learns to walk, the development of language, the gathering of experience, and the inevitable disappointments and losses of later years. The way new life arrived on Christmas morning shows us something of what God feels and intends for us. It shapes the expectations hidden within our imaginations and whispers to us the secret of who we really are.

An infant's tears are a searching for the mother. When God drew near, his first desire was the comforting arms of another. Jesus' tears remind us he came to the world to hold and be held by it. *O Jerusalem*, he later laments, *how I longed to gather you beneath my wings as a hen gathers her chicks* (Matt. 23:37). The infant crying to be held by his mother grew into a man crying to hold us too.

An infant's tears are an announcement that something is wrong. Without vocabulary, all the child can do is cry. The Lord is birthed in solidarity with a world that cannot adequately express the depths of what ails us. There are, as it were, groans deeper than words. But somehow the tears of a baby capture the depth of it well enough. God did not stay in a far-off country but came near to suffer as we do. Jesus knows what it's like to be us.

Jesus' Christmas tears are a reminder that God's promises are always fulfilled. These are not wasted, vain tears. They are the tears of one who has come to carry us to a place where our tears will be wiped away. They are the tears of one who will make a way for us to come home. Christmas reminds us that God took matters into and onto his own hands. The newborn tears of Jesus move us forward to his lonely tears in Gethsemane, his agonized tears on the cross, and perhaps even Mary's despairing tears at the tomb. Jesus' life began and ended with tears so that, through resurrection, our days of tears would be numbered.

This is why we sing "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." He came as a mother to hold a world whose tears are beyond expression. In that warm embrace, he carries us, comforts

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us, strengthens us, and restores us. “Why are you crying?” he gently asks Mary (and us). Just as he did Mary, he will call each of us by name (John 20:15–16). In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, our tears of labor pain will be replaced by tears of joy. New life is here. Hope is here—our future is now pregnant with promise. Here on this day is all we are and all we will one day become. “Joy to the world, the Lord is come.” ✨