

The Second Sunday after the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord  
St. Matthew 2:13-23  
January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Flee to Egypt

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Lord God, heavenly Father, Who didst suffer Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, to become a stranger and a sojourner in Egypt for our sakes, and didst lead Him safely home to His fatherland: Mercifully grant that we poor sinners, who are strangers and sojourners in this perilous world, may soon be called home to our true fatherland, the Kingdom of Heaven, where we shall live in eternal joy and glory; through the merits of Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Prophet Isaiah writes about our Lord + Jesus in the fifty-third and fiftieth chapters of his book that “He was despised and rejected of man.” “He was a man full of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” “He hid not His face from shame and spitting.” “Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” “He was wounded for our transgressions.” “He was bruised for our iniquities.” “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” “And with His stripes we are healed.” And from the Old Testament Lesson for today from forty-second chapter of the book of the Prophet Isaiah he says of our Lord, “He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” In all of these prophecies the Prophet Isaiah shows us what sort of life our Lord + Jesus would live on this Earth. He would live a life of suffering, and He would do it gladly and willingly. He endured the rage of Satan and his angels for His people—for us.

Our Lord + Jesus was born into our flesh to endure suffering and shame; He was born to die for us. He was born to endure the fiery arrows of the evil one, the devil. He was born for this purpose because we, His people, also endure suffering and shame. We daily face the fiery arrows of the devil and his angels. We see this in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew for today.

The magi, who we will hear about in tomorrow’s Propers on the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord, had just finished visiting St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin Mary and our beloved Savior, who is still an infant, the Lord + Jesus. That is who is referred to when the Gospel begins with the words, “Now when *they* had departed.” The “they” is the magi, who came from a far away country to see the Lord + Jesus, the newborn King of the Jews. They had stopped in Jerusalem on their way because this is where they assumed the King of the Jews would be born, in the city of the kings of Judah. But that was not the case. The Baby Who was born King of the Jews was born in the city of David; the city of Bethlehem. This is where St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Baby + Jesus are still living after His birth.

On account of the magi's stop in Jerusalem, King Herod is put on alert to an assumed threat to his throne; a threat to his power and authority. People who love power and authority do not like it when it is threatened to be taken away. They grasp at it with all their guile and manipulation. King Herod sees this newborn Baby + Jesus as a threat to his kingship—to his authority and rule—and so he therefore seeks “the young Child to destroy Him.” This is the warning that is given to St. Joseph in a dream. He is warned to take the young Child and His mother to Egypt and remain there until St. Joseph again gets word that it is safe to return.

The magi had departed to their home a different way than what they came, because they too were warned in a dream about King Herod's evil heart. So, the magi returned to their far away land in the east. St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary, and the Baby + Jesus also departed from Bethlehem for Egypt. They fled to Egypt as soon as St. Joseph arose from sleep. He took the young Child and His mother and fled to Egypt, and remained there until the death of King Herod. This course of events infuriated King Herod. And he released his wrath upon all the male children two years old and under in Bethlehem and all its districts; killing them all.

From these events we can see two things: that our Lord + Jesus suffers at the hands of evil men, and that His people suffer at the hands of evil men.

The suffering of God's people is clearly evident in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew. King Herod kills all the male children two years old and under in Bethlehem and its districts. This Gospel is also contained in the Propers for the Festival just a few days after our Lord's Nativity. Every year on December 28<sup>th</sup> the Church celebrates the Festival of the Holy Innocents. After our Lord's birth into our flesh—after His birth to be the Savior of mankind—the Church is confronted with the festival days of three martyrs. St. Stephen on December 26<sup>th</sup> is a martyr in will and deed. He willingly suffered for his preaching of the Gospel. St. John is celebrated on December 27<sup>th</sup>, he is a martyr in will but not deed. He suffered in this life but was not killed for his preaching. He was only exiled to the island of Patmos. And on December 28<sup>th</sup> the Church celebrates the Festival of the Holy Innocents who were martyrs in deed, but not will. They suffered death at the hand of King Herod, but did nothing of their own to provoke his wrath.

These martyrs of Bethlehem and its districts face persecution and death because of Who our Lord + Jesus is. The people of God suffer because of Who the Lord + Jesus is. We—the Church—suffer persecution in this world because of Who our Lord and Savior is. We suffer because our Lord + Jesus suffered at the hands of evil men.

It is easy for a person to forget in reading this text Who is actually being targeted. We see the death of the Holy Innocents and see our Lord + Jesus go free to Egypt, and the world and evil men point to how the Lord escaped and left the punishment to innocent lives. But these Holy Innocents only suffer because of Who the Lord + Jesus is. King Herod kills all the male children two years old and under only so that he might kill the Lord + Jesus. It is the Lord + Jesus he is truly seeking to destroy, just as the angel told St. Joseph in his dream.

The Church indeed suffers persecution, mockery, shame, and sometimes even death for their confession of Who the Lord + Jesus is. We endure suffering on account of Who we confess to be our Lord and Savior. The world hates the Church. The world hates the Lord + Jesus. And the devil, the world and even our own flesh seeks to destroy us and our faith. The world wants the Church gone. It rages against us with all the fury that we see here in King Herod. The martyrdom of Christians in the world is a reflection of the same hate and rage that King Herod shows here in this Gospel reading from the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew. This rage and fury is directed at us because of Who we worship; because of Whose Name we bear. But we only suffer because our Lord + Jesus first suffered for us. He suffers because He desires to save us from sin, death and the power of the devil. These do

not like it that their power and authority have been taken from them. They do not view the threat of their power being diminished kindly. They will do anything to maintain that power. Especially if it means destroying innocent lives.

This is why the words of the Prophet Isaiah that I quoted at the beginning of the sermon are important for us to hear. We will hear those words again as we enter into Lent and approach Good Friday. For when we feel the sting and pain of suffering on account of our sins, or even when we feel the sting of persecution just because of who we are as Christians, we need to turn to the cross of our Lord + Jesus, and view His suffering for us. He suffered and died on the tree of the holy cross so that we might have forgiveness, life and salvation. He suffered and died so that in eternity—in our life in Heaven—we will no longer endure any kind of pain or suffering, but we will experience joy unknown to us in this earthly life. On that brightest day of days, we will hail that our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ has come to us. For if He had not come our hope would be in vain, and we would truly have been forsaken by the world.

But our Lord + Jesus did come to us. He came to die for us. He came to suffer for us. He was sought to be destroyed by King Herod. In His earthly ministry He was tormented by the scribes and Pharisees and the religious rulers. And He suffered and died under Pontius Pilate. He endured the suffering that we deserve. For we do deserve daily God's eternal wrath and displeasure on account of our manifold sins. However, our Lord + Jesus loves us so much that He endures the wrath of God for us. He did not scorn to be born of a Virgin mother. He did not scorn to take upon Himself our flesh. He did not scorn suffering. He did not scorn the cross. He did not scorn death. But He freely and willingly gave up His life for us.

“He gave His back to the smiters.” “He was despised and rejected of man.” “He was a man full of sorrows.” “He hid not His face from shame and spitting.” “Surely, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”

We may continue to endure suffering in this life. We endure it because our Lord + Jesus endured it. But our suffering only lasts for a while. Soon, our Lord + Jesus will call us to our eternal home in Heaven, and there we will enjoy the rewards that He won for us by His suffering and death. He suffers so that we might not endure suffering for all eternity in Heaven. May the Lord + Jesus grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Gracious God and Father, in sincere humility we praise the wisdom of Thy ways, and with filial confidence yield ourselves to Thy fatherly guidance; hold us by Thy right hand, guide us with Thy counsel, and afterward receive us to glory; for the sake of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*