

The Sunday after New Year  
St. Matthew 2:13-23  
January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Flee into Egypt

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

“Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’”

### **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.

My dear friends, today’s Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew is a continuation of the Gospel reading for tomorrow, the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord. Parts of today’s Gospel pericope are also read on the Festival of the Holy Innocents, which falls on December 28<sup>th</sup> every year. The focus of the reading for that Festival is the slaughter of the innocents, the Jewish boys two years old and under, that King Herod kills in his attempt to harm the Christ Child. The beginning of this second chapter of St. Matthew, which we will hear tomorrow, focuses on the travels of the wise men to find the Christ. They saw His Star in the East and came to the land of Israel to find the newborn King.

Today’s focus is on the flight into Egypt. The Sunday after New Year does not occur every year because the Church’s year is like an accordion, when one part is longer, another part must be shorter, and vice versa. Where the day of Christmas falls determines where the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord falls. If the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord falls early in the week, then we have this Gospel reading from St. Matthew, otherwise it is skipped. This means that we do not get to hear this part of the Christmas story every year. So then, we should treasure this Gospel reading when it is heard during the Church’s year. For there is a connection to the Old Testament with the holy family’s flight into Egypt.

The country of Egypt has a strong connection to the people of Israel. If I was to ask you what that was, one would probably be quick to point out the enslavement of the people of Israel for four hundred years in Egypt. Certainly, this is a big connection. But there are other connections. Abraham himself sojourned in Egypt for a time. He had gone there on account of there being a famine in the land of Canaan. In that narrative we hear Abraham, who was still called Abram at that time, tell his wife Sarah, who was called Sarai at that time, to tell everyone that she was his sister, a point that was

technically true, because she was his half-sister. As you may remember, this caused problems, because Sarah's beauty caught the eye of the Pharaoh, which did not sit well with the Lord God, and He made bad things happen to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was hounded with plagues. Before Sarah was found out to be Abraham's wife, Pharaoh did bless Abraham with much livestock and servants. This was the first time that the people of Israel had a connection with the land of Egypt. And one can easily see the similarities between the Israelites future sojourning in Egypt.

It was Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sent down into Egypt ahead of his family. He had to endure the betrayal of his brothers and imprisonment for a crime he did not commit before he was placed in a position of power where he could save the people of Israel from starvation. For again, a famine occurred in the land of Canaan, and Jacob, and his sons and their families, went down to Egypt and lived in the choicest land, the land of Goshen, which was rich with pastureland for their flocks. So, through Joseph, the Lord God saved His people Israel, and blessed them. This Joseph had seen all these things foretold in the dreams he had which revealed that his family would bow down before him.

Even though the Israelites had spent four hundred years as slaves in Egypt, they still would try to find rescue from them again. At the time of the conquests of Assyria and Babylon, when their armies were marching against both the Northern Kingdom and Judah, the Israelites sought help from Egypt and the Pharaoh. But our Lord God did not permit them to find solace with Egypt. The remnant of Jerusalem that was not killed or exiled by the Babylonians was even warned by the Prophet Jeremiah that if they sought help down in Egypt, and did not remain in the land of Judah, they would be wiped out. Of course, they did not listen to the Lord's prophet, and were destroyed along with Egypt by the Babylonians.

Now, today, we have another Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the guardian of our Lord, who also receives a warning from the Lord God. He is warned in a dream, just like the previous Joseph, that King Herod wished to do the Child harm. Unlike the warning from the Prophet Jeremiah who warned about going down into Egypt, St. Joseph was to take the Child and His mother and flee into Egypt. They were to stay there until the angel called them out of Egypt again.

As St. Matthew points out, this is a fulfillment of a prophecy from the Prophet Hosea, the eleventh chapter. Those who first heard the prophecy would not help but think of the time when the Lord God rescued them from the bond of slavery under the Egyptians, and led them out into the wilderness to make them His people by presenting to them the Ten Commandments. The Lord God had promised to lead them into the land of Canaan, where they would displace the Canaanites, and receive a promised land flowing with milk and honey. But the Prophet Hosea was prophesying about the Christ Child, Who would also go down into Egypt just like Abraham had done before, and just like Jacob and his family had done.

They both were led into Egypt because of famine. They faced starvation and death. Our Lord + Jesus, the Christ Child, faced death not at the hands of famine and starvation, but at the hands of a wicked King who sought to destroy all impediments to him keeping an earthly throne. His wicked attempts at securing his earthly throne did not prevent him from losing it. For even though no one displaced him from his throne, he could not escape the one thing that all mankind will suffer. King Herod died shortly after his slaughter of the innocent boys of Bethlehem and the surrounding areas. He died a horrible and painful death we are told by the historian Josephus.

But our Lord + Jesus did not come to establish an earthly kingdom, therefore King Herod did not need to worry. Our Lord came to establish an eternal and heavenly Kingdom. Like the Israelites that we called out of Egypt by the servant of the Lord God, Moses, and were led into a land flowing with milk and honey; into a promised land, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, came to lead mankind into an eternal Promised Land. He came to bring us into the eternal realms of Heaven. He would be called out of Egypt

when St. Joseph would have another dream in which an angel of the Lord told him it was safe to return to the land of Judah. After hearing that Herod the Great's son, Archelaus, reigned in his place, they returned to the land where they had been at in the beginning, the land of Nazareth. Here, the Lord would fulfill another prophecy. He would be called a Nazarene.

This rescue of our Lord, and the rescues of Abraham and the people of Israel, point to our own rescue. For we have also been called out of Egypt. We have been called out of the land of slavery and bondage in sin, to the Promised Land where our Lord God supplies all our needs and grants us every spiritual blessing. We are taught by the Lord to flee to Him, to flee to the One from Whom we will find protection and blessing. We are not blessed with earthly things as was Abraham when he resided in Egypt, nor the Israelites when they plundered the Egyptians on their way out of the land of slavery, but we are blessed with far greater blessings. We are blessed with forgiveness of our sins. By faith we have been justified, we have been called out of sin and death, into a spiritual life that lasts forever and ever. We have been called out of sin and death to come and dwell in our Lord's blessed Church.

Here in this place our Lord + Jesus sustains us on our journey through this life. He strengthens and renews our faith in Him by His holy Word and Sacraments. He fills our ears with the good news that our sins have been forgiven, that He rescues us from the devil and his horde, and that He will one day take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven.

St. Joseph heard the warning of the angel and obeyed. He arose, and took the Child and His mother and fled into Egypt. St. Joseph is a picture of the Apostles, who warn the Church to flee from those things that seek our hurt and harm. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh wish to leave us in the clutches of sin and death. St. Joseph was told to flee to Egypt to escape the death the Herod sought for the Christ Child. We are told to flee from worldly lusts and the desires of our own flesh into the Church, where our Lord protects us from all harm and danger by His holy Word.

Therefore, my dear friends, hear the warning of the Lord God through His angel, His messenger, and cling in faith to the One Who rescues us all from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has won the way for us into Heaven. Cling to Him and He will give you rest. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the 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!*