

The Father keeps his Son Safe

The gospel for this coming Sunday (First Sunday after Christmas) is Matthew 2:13-23. This text includes three narratives: The flight to Egypt, Herod killing the children, and the return to Nazareth. Each of the accounts has a fulfillment of an OT prophecy.

This follows the visit of the Magi. With Herod in an uproar, the Father's first act of protection comes when he points the Wise men to not go back to Herod but leave by another route. Now the Father, through a dream, directs Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt.

After all the trouble and suffering the Israelites had endured in Egypt before the exodus, it might seem like a strange place for Joseph and Mary to go with the Christ Child. But it was not strange at all. First of all, we need to realize that Egypt had been a traditional place of refuge. Abraham had gone to Egypt during a famine (Genesis 12:10). Jacob and his family of 70 souls took refuge in Egypt for the same reason (Genesis 46), and they became a mighty nation there. Jesus, on the other hand, comes up from Egypt (Hosea 11:1) in order that he might live and grow and finally save his people from their bondage to sin.

Filled with fury over being tricked, Herod takes his rage out on the male children who are under two years old. The grief that the parents experience is described by the Hebrew nouns "wailing" and "weeping of bitterness." The prophecy is "A voice is heard in Ramah of lament and weeping and mourning."

Ramah was five miles north of Jerusalem. It was a place where Jewish captives had been assembled for deportation to Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1). Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife, childless for years, finally the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. She died in childbirth. Rachel weeping for her children represented all the Jewish mothers who wept over Israel's tragedy in the days of Jeremiah.

The third story follows the death of Herod and is of God directing Joseph to return but go to Nazareth of Galilee to continue to be out of harm's way. The temple authorities in Jerusalem tended to look down on people living in Galilee because they came into contact with many more Gentiles.

We can draw great comfort from these histories knowing that God the Father directed every phase of Jesus' ministry and that nothing was left to chance. Our Father is a part of every aspect of our lives as well. He knows all of our needs and supplies everything that is necessary for our eternal salvation.

Prayer: Loving Father, help me to pray with Jesus, "Your will be done," and follow where you lead.
Amen. (TLSB)