

**Notes for Next Sunday**  
First Sunday after Christmas

**The Point of this Week's Readings**

Old Testament (Isaiah 63:7-14). In recalling God's deeds of mercy the writer's heart grows warm and his tongue eloquent; thoughts gush forth. This verse seems to clash with reality. For Israel was most stubborn and continually going counter to the revealed will of the Lord. None knew that better than the Lord himself. Surely, the Lord was not blindly deceiving himself. Strict reasoning is not going to fathom the depth of divine love. This verse surely says with emphasis that the Lord's favors toward the nation were utterly underserved. The last statement of the verse may be a reference to what God did in Egypt and wilderness. (Leupold)

Epistle (Galatians 4:4-7). At God's perfect time, maturity came, brought by the Son of God Himself. Jesus was born as a Jew so He might be subject to all the ceremonial laws as well as the moral law, the Ten Commandments. Having kept them perfectly, and also suffering for us the penalty of sin (death), He "redeemed us – bought us back from the curse and power of the Law, so that we might have full adoption into the family with all the rights of sons. (LL)

Gospel (Matthew 2:13-23). Mt 2:13–23 continues the account of Jesus' earliest years and of the radical contrast between the two kings (Jesus versus Herod/Archelaus). These verses are also remarkable in that in the compass of one page of Greek text, Matthew gives us no less than three of his ten OT citation formulas (this happened "in order that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled," 2:15, 17, 23). Both in the way that he narrates the events of this text and in the particular OT citations that he applies to the child, Matthew proclaims that Jesus is the true King of God's people—and even more than that, Jesus himself embodies the people. (CC)

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 63:7-14

**<sup>7</sup> I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. <sup>8</sup> He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Savior. <sup>9</sup> In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. <sup>10</sup> Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. <sup>11</sup> Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people— where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, <sup>12</sup> who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, <sup>13</sup> who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; <sup>14</sup> like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.**

*63:7 kindnesses.* A demonstration of God's unfailing love as he stood true to his covenant with Israel. (CSB)

*63:9 In all their distress ... distressed.* There is something touching about the manner in which the Lord identified himself with his people's sufferings. This is divine empathy at its best. (Leupold)

*63:9 angel of his presence.* A long-standing Christian interpretation is that when God appears tangibly in the guise of his Messenger/Angel in the OT, this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

*63:10 grieved his Holy Spirit.* Though he is the Holy One of Israel and is absolutely transcendent, God is not so far above the fray that he is unmoved by human sin and suffering.

*63:12 arm of power.* Symbol of God's power. (CSB)

#### EPISTLE – Galatians 4:4-7

**<sup>4</sup>But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.**

*4:4 time had fully come.* Pictures a container steadily being filled with the passage of time until full. Corresponds to “date set by his father” in V. 2. Thus at a specific and appropriate time in human history, God acted to fulfill His eternal purpose. (TLSB)

*4:4 born of a woman.* The preexistent Son of God (1 Co 8:6; Php 2:6-11; Col 1:15-16) became fully human. Paul nowhere mentioned Mary by name; Jesus was the focus of his theology and devotion. (TLSB)

*4:4 born under law.* Jesus was born a Jew and under obligation to keep the Law of Moses (see FC SD III 58). Consistent with Paul's imagery, Jesus entered our prison (3:23). (TLSB)

*4:6 Abba, Father.* Aram for “papa,” an address of special intimacy not typically found in Judaism. (TLSB)

*4:7 God has made.* This is due entirely to God. (Lenski)

#### GOSPEL – Matthew 2:13-23

**<sup>13</sup>When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” <sup>14</sup>So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup>where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” <sup>16</sup>When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup>Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: <sup>18</sup>“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”**

*2:13 escape 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. They remained in Egypt until God led them out under Moses some 400 years later. Jeroboam fled to Egypt when Solomon tried to kill him (1 Kings 11:40), and Uriah also fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 26:21-23). There were many Jews in Egypt at this time, so Mary and Joseph could feel quite at home and secure there.

2:14 left. Joseph obeyed the angel's command that very night. (TLSB)

2:15 *Out of Egypt I called my son.* In Hos 11:1, the Lord referred to Israel as "My son," whom He called out of Egypt at the time of the exodus. Jesus is here named as God's one and only Son, who was the representative and substitute for all Israel. God would also call this Son out of Egypt to redeem His sinful people. (TLSB)

2:16 *kill all the boys ... two years old and under.* The figure probably reflects how long it had been since the Magi first saw the star. Since Herod did not know which young boy might be his potential rival, he ordered a mass killing of all male children up to two years old in Bethlehem and the surrounding region. These young boys, traditionally called "The Holy Innocents," are regarded as the first martyrs in the NT. (TLSB)

2:18 *Ramah...Rachel weeping for her children.* Ramah was five miles north of Jerusalem, on the border of Israel. 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. She also typifies the grieving mothers at Bethlehem as Matthew points out. (PBC)

**<sup>19</sup> After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt <sup>20</sup> and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." <sup>21</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, <sup>23</sup> and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."**

2:19 *after Herod died.* It may have been only a matter of a few months that Joseph and Mary and the Christ Child remained in Egypt. Herod died about Easter time 4 B.C. The Jewish historian Josephus in his Antiquities reports that Herod "died of...ulcerated entrails, putrefied and maggot-filled organs, constant convulsions, foul breath, and neither physician nor warm baths led to recovery." (PBC)

2:22 *Archelaus.* After Herod's death, this son was made ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. A brutal tyrant, he was deposed and exiled in AD 6. (TLSB)

2:23 *Nazareth.* Small, insignificant town not mentioned in the OT. Hardly the place from which to expect the Messiah. (TLSB)

2:23 *He will be called a Nazarene.* Because Nazareth was a despised place, someone coming from there would also be despised. Matthew's comment reflects the surprising character of the outcome of these prophecies. That many would despise the Messiah is reflected in various OT prophecies (cf Ps 22:6-8, 13; Is 53:2-3, 8). (TLSB)