

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sunday after Christmas, December 28, 2008

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Hymns: 55, 58:1, 65, 64, 558.

Lessons: Hosea 11: 1-12, Hebrews 8: 3-10, Matthew 2: 1-23.

Sermon Text: Hosea 11:1.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

(Micah 5:2 KJV) "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

After the birth of Jesus, the Magi had come from the East to see and worship the one born King of the Jews. They had gone to ask king Herod about this. Herod was paranoid about anyone who might try to take over his power – in a complex web of evil and murder he had killed even his own sons. He had played along with the Wise Men and *“had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, [and he] asked them where the Christ was to be born.* Matthew 2: 4. He learned it was to be the town of Bethlehem in Judea and told the Wise Men secretly, asking that they come back and tell him when they found the king. But they didn't come back to him, and this led to the slaughter of the infant boys in the region of Bethlehem. *“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.”* Matthew 2:16.

Jesus would have been among those slaughtered except for one thing: Joseph, supposed to be his father, had been warned in a dream by an angel to flee to Egypt. Then, when it was safe and wicked king Herod was dead, Mary, Joseph, and the young Jesus returned to the land of Canaan. This return from Egypt is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy in our sermon text. Today let's consider

“OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON”

- 1. The significance of “calling out of Egypt” for the Jews.**
- 2. What happened in the life of the young Jesus.**
- 3. What does this mean for us today?**

Our text begins a chapter that tells us what the Lord felt for his child Israel and reviews some history of the nation of Israel. At the time of the Old Testament Joseph, who was Jacob's son, the Lord preserved Israel, his Old Testament child, from death in a famine through a flight into Egypt. They are called “the children of Israel” because Israel is another name for Jacob. While they were in Egypt, *“a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.” So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly. They made their lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their hard labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.”* Exodus 1:8-

14. So what had started as a good thing for Israel turned into slavery and oppression. Egyptian midwives were even commanded to throw every boy that was born to the Israelites into the Nile River so they would drown.

Eventually the Lord called the nation back to the promised land to carry out his plan of salvation. After 430 years God led them out of Egypt through his prophet Moses. As a three-month old baby, Moses was placed into a basket sealed with tar and pitch in the Nile River, was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, and brought up in a royal house in Egypt. God used this man to lead his people to the land promised to Abraham in Canaan. This deliverance from slavery in Egypt was a key turning point in Israel's history, and was remembered and celebrated by all Israelites. This deliverance and escape from Egypt was used often by God as a picture of God's deliverance in any and every situation, and especially has been a picture of deliverance from the slavery of sin, death and the power of the devil. Even Hosea reminds us of that: ***"But I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me. I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat. When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me."*** Hosea 13:4-6

There were few events in their history that were more remembered among the children of Israel than this deliverance from slavery in Egypt. God used it frequently to remind his chosen people of how he loved them and changed their lives. But of course this reminder of God's love didn't keep the Israelites from ignoring and breaking the commands of the Lord God.

So the idea of calling or leading out of Egypt had great significance for Israel. Israel was a picture or symbol of Christ and calling and leading them out of Egypt had special significance for an event that happened in the life of the young Jesus.

The Magi had visited Jesus, and given great, expensive gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then ***"When [the wise men] 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." So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 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."***" Matthew 2:13-15. A common gospel lesson for the Sunday after Christmas reminds us of the slaughter of the young children by evil king Herod. But today we're not looking so much at the flight into Egypt or even the reason for that escape into Egypt as we are the return out of Egypt as a fulfillment of a specific Old Testament prophecy.

Did you notice how abruptly Joseph took his family to Egypt? He didn't wait and plan his escape. He didn't hang around in Bethlehem to take care of any business or personal matters. Now the child Jesus could have been more than two years old by now so travel would have been very difficult with that age child. They left during the night, probably with little more than the clothes on their backs. Joseph obeyed the Word of God without a second thought, without a question, without wavering. Oh for such a faith as this!

Hosea writes by inspiration: ***"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son."*** Because Matthew in our gospel lesson quotes Hosea, we know this applies to Mary, Joseph, and especially to the child Jesus returning from Egypt. Jesus, of course, is literally, truly the Son of God. But we could also find several other events in the history of Israel as a nation that this could apply to. Jacob, also called Israel, was chosen by God instead of his older twin brother Esau to be the family of the promise of the Savior. Thus God loved Israel – Jacob – even when he was a child. We could also point out that the nation of Israel – the descendants of Jacob – was very young – just one generation old when they went into Egypt to eventually end up in slavery. But 430 years later, in the entire scheme of history, Israel was still a "young" nation. Thus we could see God's love for the young nation of Israel in that he called them out of Egypt. But Matthew specifically says this is the fulfillment of a prophecy when they returned after ***"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.”“ Matthew 2:15. There is no clearer fulfillment of prophecy than when God himself tells us in his holy word. Listen!

“After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 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.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. 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, 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.”“ Matthew 2:19-23. We don't know exactly how long Jesus, Joseph, and Mary were in Egypt. It could have been just a matter of months. But Herod was now dead.

“Out of Egypt I called my son.”This was surely a glad time for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus when they could return to their own country. The expensive and generous gifts of the Magi no doubt helped pay their expenses while they lived in Egypt.

But it was more than just a happy time for a little family. The Son of God came back to Israel so that he might fulfill all that the scriptures prophesied about him, and especially so that he would suffer and die to be punished for the sins of all mankind. For it was essential that man live a perfect life to atone for sins. Our sins, and the sins of all mankind, would condemn us, and all mankind, to hell forever. No man could ever live a perfect life to pay for even his own sins. But Jesus the Christ, true man and true God, did live a perfect, sinless life for us, in our place, so that we should not be punished for our sins. Then he was pierced, crushed, punished, wounded for our sins. What a joy for us that **“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”** Isaiah 53:4-6.

In the Old Testament people of Israel we find a reminder of what God has done for us – he loved us and redeemed us. But we also find a warning against turning our backs on him. The Jews as a nation by and large rejected Jesus and reject him to this day as the promised Savior from sin.

God keeps his promises. He promised a Savior and gave signposts all along the way throughout the entire Old Testament, even the supposedly “little” signposts like the prophecy in our text. Every Word of God is important, even those little words we may overlook and may think are unimportant.

God extends an invitation, a call to all men to come out of the slavery of sin, death and the power of the devil. Believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and you shall be saved eternally! This is possible because of what Jesus did to pay the price for our sins and set us free.

God led Joseph and Mary to Egypt to protect his one and only incarnate Son from the hand of the murderous King Herod. After all, Jesus had to live a sinless life before he would die for the sins of all men. After Herod's death, the Father called his Son back out of Egypt to live, suffer, die and rise again for our redemption. That event, too, fulfilled a prophecy in God's sacred word.

Because Jesus returned out of Egypt, we are redeemed from the “Egyptian bondage” of sin and eternal damnation. Praise be to God for this gift! Amen.