

Title: Out of Egypt
Text: Matthew 2.13-15
Theme: God works in ways that we would never anticipate.
Series: Advent 2021 part 1 of 2
Prop Stmnt. God works every detail according to his good and glorious plan.

Read Text: Hosea 11.1-3; Matthew 2.13-15

Have you ever been reading a book and someone has asked; “Whatcha reading?” And you politely answer. Then comes the question, “What’s it about?” Now you have a choice. Do they look like they really want to know, or are they just being nice? Because, if they really want to know, well, you know that you may have quite a bit of explaining to do. Some books are not very easy to explain in 30 seconds because what is happening in the story right now, is connected to so many other things that have been taking place, and one cannot really understand the now, unless they understand the then.

That, is just like what we call the Christmas story. What is it about? How much time do you have? This event did not just happen all by itself. For its tentacles reach back to the opening moments of creation, and reach forward to the culmination of all of history, and reach up to the throne room of heaven. And here we are in the midst of history, trying to figure out history. Like the old Chinese proverb says, “if you want to know what water is, don’t ask a fish.” We have known nothing else, so it so difficult for us to have a context to understand what is really happening now. When Matthew writes about the Christmas story, he provides a context for us so that we can see that there is a whole lot more going on than what we would have ever realized if we had been there.

But why should you bother to listen to all of this today? The events of your life are not by accident. The God who died for you is the same God who designed you and who designed this world. You fit into a created system. What you experience, what you encounter, what you face in life is all part of this created system. You can only see the events of today. God knows the connection to the past, future and eternity. While he does not give us every detail about how it all fits together, there are times when He gives us examples of how it does. Our text is one such example.

1. **God works all things for His immediate Plan.** (13)

A. **God’s immediate Plan was to protect His Son.**

While Matthew does not mention the angels’ announcement to the shepherds, Matthew’s account does mention an angel’s involvement three times in the birth and early life of Christ. God sent an angel to Joseph to tell him that Mary’s pregnancy was no ordinary pregnancy. Since an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, it is possible that God used an angel to warn the Magi in a dream, although Matthew does not specify

that. But God sends an angel to Joseph in another dream and warns him to *“take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.”*

Notice the order of the words. In normal conversation, we speak of a mother and her child. In singing Silent Night, we sing, “round, yon virgin, mother and child.” But two times here, that normal order is reversed. The angel, and then in Matthew’s own words put the child ahead of his mother. This child is the point. He is what it is all about. God sent an angel because his immediate plan was to protect His Son. Why? Because...

B. God’s immediate Plan was to provide us with a Savior.

God’s immediate plans are always connected to His greater purposes. The immediate plans may not always make sense to us, but they are all connected. However, there are times when His immediate plan and His greater purpose are seen together. One of God’s greater purposes was to show us that He is a God who loves to redeem people. In order to redeem us, God had to rescue us and save us through a Savior. For thousands of years, God had been setting the stage to send a Savior. Now, it was happening. But even though the invasion of God into the world through Christ was an event planned, announced and predicted for hundreds and hundreds of years, it was virtually missed. In addition to that, those who ended up following Him as the Messiah, missed the significance and the importance of his death when it actually happened.

What would it have been like to live on the earth when Christ came? As intriguing as that may seem to be, as much as we wonder at this time of year, what that first Christmas experience was, realize this: no one knew what it was all about. Different people had different pieces of the puzzle, but no one had been able to put it all together. Today, we actually live in a much better situation. We have the Scriptures. We are able to look back with a sense of awe at how God put together seemingly disconnected pieces to form His plan. If God was able to do that then, can you imagine what amazing things God is going to do in preparation for the 2nd Coming? But even life for us right now has a level of mystery to it. The human heart cries out for answers. We ask the question why because we want answers. Why is this happening to me? Why am I going through this? We want to be able to put the pieces together, but there are times when we cannot. In fact, most of the time we cannot. The life, ministry and death of Christ is a glaring example of how difficult it really is to put the pieces together as they happen, even when you are part of the story. The players in the story, knew that what was happening was important, but Mary did you know? Joseph did you know? Shepherds did you know? Did anyone know all that was going on? No. What they did know was God’s immediate plan. *“Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.”*

This much was obvious to Joseph and Mary. God was going to protect His Son from death. Looking back now, we can see that God only protected His Son from dying then, but there would come a day when the Father would not protect His Son from dying. In fact, He ordained it.

2. God works in all things for His ultimate Purpose. (15)

In this text, God is helping us understand how important Christ really is to this world. He has been preparing the world for this moment because of what Christ came to do. God raised up the nation of Israel in order to bring Christ to the world. God loved Israel, like he loved his Son and treated Israel like he treated his Son. However, where Israel failed to love God, Christ did not fail.

Matthew's account of the life of Christ is written with a specific goal in mind. Everything that he includes is to help his audience understand that goal. He wants you to see that Jesus is the King, the Messiah of Israel. So, when Matthew writes about the birth of Christ, he focuses on five aspects of the story that show that Christ fulfilled the OT promises and prophecies of the king who was coming. This text is the 3rd one of the 5. But this brings up an interesting wrinkle. The 3rd and 4th prophecies do not sound like prophecies in the OT. What Matthew sees, under the direction of the Spirit of God, is that everything that happened in the OT points to Christ in some fashion. It may not be explicit, but it only adds to the idea that Christ really is the hero of the Bible. So, why does Matthew see the trip to and from Egypt as being more than simply running for their lives? After all, there was a large concentration of Jews who lived in Egypt during this time, perhaps up to a million, so it was not unusual for a Jew to go there. But the angel specifically directs Joseph to go there, because there is more to it than that. And that is what I want you to see.

The last half of v.15 is taken from the OT prophet, Hosea. Hosea married a prostitute who shortly after they were married was unfaithful to him and eventually left him. What she thought was going to be freedom was in reality bondage, and she ended up so messed up, and in so much debt that she sold herself in the market as an indentured servant. She would be owned by the highest bidder. The highest bidder that day, was Hosea. God told him to do it, because God wanted Israel to know that this is how much he loved her. The very life of Hosea was an illustration of the message that he preached and wrote. In Hosea 11, Hosea is speaking on behalf of God about Israel and how much affection God has on his people. Hosea 11.1 reads, "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*" The rest of the text takes us into the very heart of God and shows us the compassion of God and the longing of God for his people, who insist on rebelling against him and following idols. The language is the heart-wrenching cry of a guy who loves his wife even though she keeps going out on him every night. He knows that he has to do something about it, but he really has no desire for justice. If she would just repent, he would gladly take her back. There are different images and analogies that God uses. In Hosea, Israel is portrayed as the unfaithful wife and (11.1) as an ungrateful and rebellious son. The point is very clear. God has deep affection for his people.

But, this idea of Israel being God's son is not unique to Hosea. In Exodus 4 God instructed Moses what to say to Pharaoh. (v.22-23) "*Then you shall say to Pharaoh,*

'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.' So, now the picture begins to become clearer. Israel was to God, like a firstborn son. Israel was to be the people who would enjoy his favor and inherit his blessing. Israel was supposed to honor, esteem, love and follow their father, like a firstborn son. God was prepared to shower Israel with incredible blessing, but Israel rebelled and in her rebellion, she brought shame and reproach upon the honor of God. We see hints of this in her complaining before and after the dramatic rescue at the Red Sea. Then we see this rebellion in full force at the foot of Mt. Sinai, when the people break the covenant with God and create an idol and begin to worship it. Her continuing rebellion results in her wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before she is able to inherit her land. All of these experiences; exile in Egypt, wilderness isolation, trial and temptation are part of what it means to be an Israelite. If you, or your ancestors did not experience this, then you just can't identify with these people.

But there is another related theme that is clearly obvious. Look at the similarities between Moses and Christ. Moses and Christ lived at a time when the king of the land was trying to kill the boys. Moses and Christ had to flee the land of their birth because the king wanted them dead. Moses and Christ were rejected as leaders by their own people. Moses was the founder of the Israelite covenant and Jesus was the founder of the New Covenant. So, now we are ready to see why Matthew included this.

Big idea: 1) Israel's experience in Egypt was ordained by God to prepare them for the Messiah because they could see how their King was truly one of them. At the same time, 2) Christ's experience in Egypt was ordained by God to fulfill his mission to be the perfect representative for his people.

Christ identifies with Israel. He is one of them. Christ lived what Israel experienced. He survived an attempted holocaust. He lived in Egypt in exile. He lived in the wilderness for 40 days (vs. 40 years) and was tested. He was raised in their land, ate their food, went to the Temple and experienced the customs and the holy days. He was the Son that Israel was not. Christ fulfilled Israel's purpose. He did for them what they could not do for themselves. And along the way, Christ personally knew and deeply felt what it was like to be Israel. No one of his people could accuse him of not knowing. So, not only did Christ experience their history, but this also means that God called Israel to go into and out of Egypt and into the wilderness where they were tempted in order to prepare them to know and accept Christ as their Messiah. They were being prepared by God to see that this king was uniquely prepared to be their Savior. This King experienced their history. He was there and he lived it. And not only that, but this Christ was not just their Messiah, He is the King of the Earth. Israel will never have a leader who loves her more and cares for her more than Jesus.

Therefore, the rejection of Christ, by his own people, is the greatest injustice, and the most grievous, heart-breaking, judgment-incurring choice that has ever been made in

the history of the world, apart from Adam's sin. The rejection of Christ by his own people will only be heightened by the fact that Israel will, according to Daniel 9.27, make a covenant with the Antichrist, which will begin the 7 years of tribulation on the earth. It is like a girl, who rejected the love of a prince who would care for her and protect her, but instead gave herself to an angry, unfaithful man who beat her, tormented her and abused her. Here is a king who was so humble that he lived among his people and experienced life the way they did and at the same time was a Savior who in living these experiences never failed. He never failed. He believed God, even in the darkest point of the trial. He embraced God's plan even when it cost him his life. And he did that because Christ really trusted His Father and His Father's plan. By his faith and obedience Christ fulfilled all righteousness. And therefore, he lived in the place of every single person who would trust in him, because every act of righteousness, every response of faith, every obedient thought and word, were done to provide perfectly complete righteousness for sinners. But, what did all of this perfection get him? It seemed that all that he got was rejection. His perfection enraged the self-righteous because it revealed that they were not righteous. His living a perfect life in our place resulted in him being condemned to die, because sinful humanity could not handle living in the presence of perfection. And so, he died. Yet, like Joseph whose brothers sold him into Egypt, what they meant for evil, God overruled for good. The rejection, condemnation and execution of Christ was the full and complete sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus had to go to Egypt in order to identify with his people, so that he could perfectly represent them. When Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt, he was fulfilling God's plan for his Son to be identified with his people.

God loves to redeem. Yes, God is a God who judges. But He is a God who loves to redeem. Redemption is His heart. Out of Egypt God called his people. How did he do that? He did that through redemption. They used to be slaves to Pharaoh but he brought them out on the basis of the Passover lambs who were slain. God loved bringing his people out of bondage into freedom. All of this was pointing to the day when Jesus, the Lamb of God would die in your place and pay the price you could not pay so that God could forgive us of our sins and bring us out of the slave market of sin into a new realm, in which we are right now, the children of God with all of the legal rights and privileges that go with that. That is His heart. Think of how much Christ understands you and is "for" you. He not only died as your substitute, meaning, he not only suffered for your sins and paid for them, he experienced the weaknesses and the consequences of your sin in his living for you. *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."* (Hebrews 4.15) Christ understands you. His life was designed to understand you, by living for you, experiencing what you do, then dying in your place. Every detail of his life was part of a bigger picture. That is true for you as well. Trust Him as Savior, as your Priest, and as your King.

The things that happen in your life are immediate issues. Right now, you do not know how everything that you face or that is in your life is part of God's greater purposes. What you know is that they are. God did not tell Hosea that for over 2,000 years, people would learn from his life that God will go to remarkable lengths to redeem his people. God may not use you to write a book in the Bible, since He finished that a while ago. But God may use your life to illustrate some of its truths in ways you will never know. Someday God is going to establish a kingdom on this earth for His Son. Someday, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Someday, we will crown him King of kings and Lord of lords.

When you finish a race in record time, you can look back on the training and say, it was worth it. When your team wins the title, you can look back on the hard practices and say, it was worth it. When your presentation at work results in a multi-year contract that secures the employment of many workers, you can look back at the hours and hours and say, it was worth it. When your daughter walks across down an aisle and marries a man that you would have picked for her if you could, you can say, all of the effort into raising her was worth it. How much greater will our joy be, when we with the crushing, magnificent audience of the redeemed see Jesus, robed, crowned and declared King of kings and Lord of lords? On that day, we will look back and say, it was worth it. Our faith and steadfastness even in dark and lonely times, will give way to that day of days.

One day we will see our immediate issues in light of his greater purposes and his ultimate goals. God is not only preparing to establish a kingdom for His Son, God is calling a people from all over this world to trust Him.

Revelation 19.11-16