

December 29, 2019

Matthew 2:13-23:

“The Exodus and Jesus”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The theme that I have chosen for the message today is **The Exodus and Jesus**. I can tell you from the start that we have bitten off way more than we can possibly chew in a sermon or even a Bible class. The importance of the Exodus event in the Old Testament cannot be underestimated. There are over 120 explicit Old Testament references to the Exodus alone. On the Mountain of Transfiguration the topic of discussion revolves around the exodus which Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). And if you read and study the gospel of Matthew you will be startled to see how the exodus serves as the model for the work of Jesus.

Consider how the Holy Spirit guides Matthew to set forward the life and work of Jesus in the order of the Exodus. The Israelites found themselves in Egypt. In our text we have the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt in order to escape the sword of king Herod. Both the Israelites and the holy family are oppressed by earthly rulers - the Pharaoh of Egypt and king Herod, respectively. The Israelites and Jesus are called out of Egypt. The Israelites are baptized in the Red Sea and Jesus is baptized in the Jordan. The Israelites go into the wilderness, and after the baptism of Jesus he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The Israelites make their way to a mountain to receive the law. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus goes up a mountain and delivers a sermon saying that all is to be fulfilled in him. Israel crossed the Jordan to conquer the land and they were to be a light to the nations. The beginning of the ministry of Jesus is announced as a movement "beyond the Jordan" and as "a great light" dawning in the midst of darkness. The whole ministry of Christ is a deliverance and a conquering that leads to our heaven.

The whole Exodus was an event of deliverance for an oppressed people. The slavery of Israel in Egypt under Pharaoh was a picture of slavery under sin, death, and the power of hell. The people groaned under their bondage and cried out for help. As it says in the book of Exodus (2:24), "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." Deliverance came in the Passover. It is no coincidence that it is the time of the celebration of the Passover, when the people left Egypt, that Jesus institutes his holy supper: "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Indeed! The ultimate deliverance in which the Exodus foreshadowed! Jesus is the Passover lamb.

We have barely scratched the surface. Still, I say these things to you in order that you might be strengthened in the reality of your deliverance in Jesus Christ, and that you might grow in your consideration of these things. **The Exodus and Jesus** takes us to a design that not only helps us to hold on to certain things and to see that God is a God of history, but to elucidate and magnify the wonders of his love. That really is the design of our lesson for this morning. Matthew writes:

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the

child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son (Matthew 2:13-15)."

The quote, "Out of Egypt I called my son," has been the subject of much discussion. It comes from Hosea 11:1. The passage stands in the middle of a section where prophet speaks about the rebellious and sinful people of Israel. The verse recalls God's love for his people when he called them out of Egypt. They recall the words of Exodus 4:22-23, "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.'" At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, God in love chose the nation of Israel to be his "son." The nation rebelled against the Lord all the way down to the time of the prophet Hosea. Thus, Israel in Hosea 11:1 had failed to be the "son" God chose the nation to be, and so the people stood under God's judgment. It emphasizes the impossibility of anyone to be a child of God apart from Christ.

What this means is that the Exodus of old was not a finished deliverance, but only a foreshadowing of what was to come in the true Son. The Israelites exit Egypt by virtue of "the angel [messenger] of his presence" - Jesus! Matthew is setting forward the truth that Jesus is the embodiment of Israel and the only son by which people can be saved and made into the true children of God. The failure of Israel to be a "son" only emphasized the truth of the impossibility of salvation apart from the saving power of the one who is both Son of God and Son of Man. Jesus captures, summarizes, repeats the history of the nation of Israel. Jesus takes the place of Israel, and reenacts its history, but where Israel failed, Jesus succeeds. In the ultimate Exodus that took place at the cross in Jerusalem he is the true and final son through whom we become the children of God. In the words of Jeffrey A. Gibbs in his commentary on *Matthew 1:1-11:1*:

This perfect Son offers perfect obedience to his Father's will to save the people. How will he do that? By going where they went (to Egypt and back), by standing where they stood (in the waters of the Jordan), by fighting and winning spiritual battles where they fought and lost (in the wilderness for a period of forty years), and ultimately, by dying where and how they deserved to die: in their place as the ransom payment in the place of the many (20:28; 26:28).

Our Old Testament lesson for this morning draws a lot of these things together in a way where we can begin to see the practical implications. The heart of the section deals with the steadfast love of the Lord, showing that our salvation is entirely dependent upon him. No one can possibly save themselves. Isaiah writes (63:7-9):

I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely." And he became their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

The prophet is referring to the Exodus, as it is made clear by what follows after the quote. In the midst of the sad state of Israel, the prophet Isaiah cries out asking, "Where is he ... who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name, who led them through the depths?" While there is much to say in terms of the way in which the prophet Isaiah answers the question, we could just as well add that God answers by calling his son out of Egypt to save his people (to use the words of the prophet Hosea). We could also add the words of Paul (Gal. 3:26): "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."

Like the Israelites, we are slaves of the Egyptian bondage of sin, death, and the devil. But a son has been called out of Egypt that we may cross through the sea of our baptisms into a wilderness journey where we will for a time pick up our crosses and wrestle with our sinful natures and many unbelieving nations who seek to destroy us. But, the Son has brought us to the mountain of the gospel where the law has been fulfilled into a yoke of faith that is easy and a burden that is light - where you will find rest for your souls. Jesus has conquered death and has brought us into a land where the Scriptures say, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." Indeed! By faith we are already in the land that is ours, and yet we look forward to seeing it with our own eyes.

He has called his Son out of Egypt. And if he has called his Son out of Egypt, and you believe in the Son, then he has also called you out of your slavery to sin, death, and hell. From the Christian perspective, we see that all the failures on the part of Israel and us can only be overcome by the steadfast love of Jesus who is the perfect Son who makes it possible for us to be adopted as children. May God then graciously grant us faith and keep us from becoming a rebellious people. May it be that we never destroy the good gift of the Son who has done all things for our salvation! Let us remember that the record of Old Testament Israel has been written down that we may not desire evil as they did. Paul writes (Romans 8:12-17):

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott