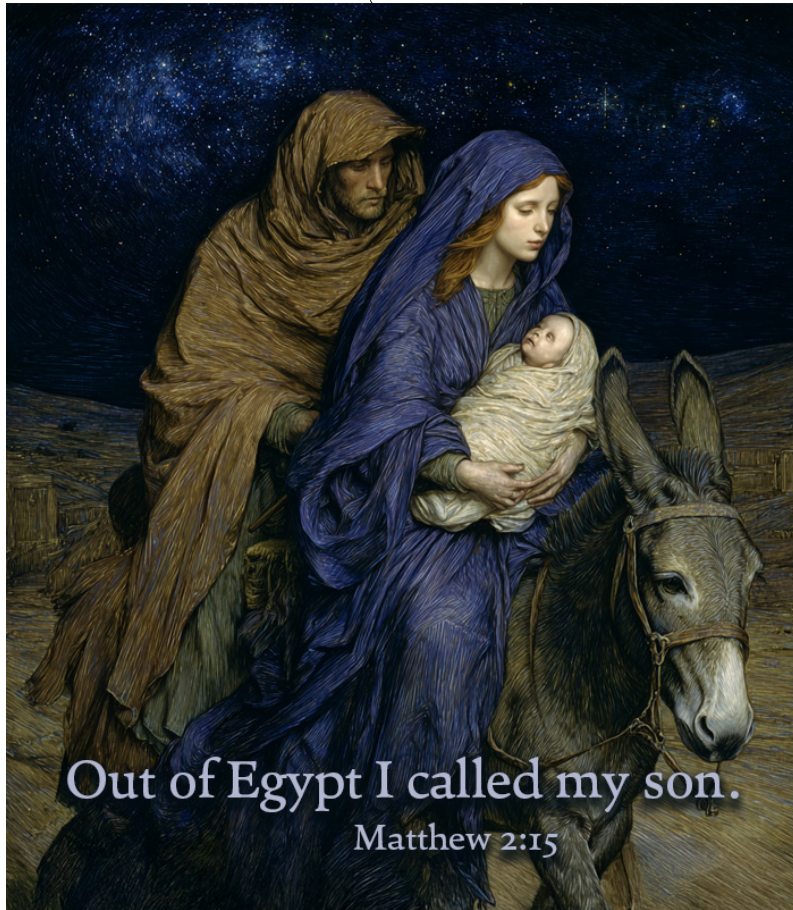


First Sunday after Christmas, Year A Growing Up



The Lord be with you.
Let us pray. Almighty
God, you have given us
your only-begotten Son
to take our nature and be
born of the Virgin Mary.
Grant that we, having
been redeemed and made
your children by grace,
may daily be renewed by
your Holy Spirit; through
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy
Spirit, one God, now and
forever. Amen. (Book of
Common Prayer, 1549)

— First Reading – Isaiah 63:7-14 —

Recount. That is what we do during Christmas. We recount or retell the stories of our faith, how God has steadfastly loved us. We narrate the story of how God did not leave us to our own devices but instead became our Savior. He was afflicted in our afflictions. We may suffer in this life, but in the midst of our afflictions, we are called to recount the Christmas story—how God became our Savior, suffering the curse of the cross so that we may live with him in eternal Christmas glory.

*And
he became
their Savior.
In all their
affliction he
was afflicted.*

Isaiah 63:8-9

— Psalm III —

No wonder people show up for church at Christmas and Easter. Though we want them with us on other Sundays too, we can be thankful that they are so touched by the Christmas story that they want to be there giving thanks for their Savior. Take the time to remind them that God is faithful throughout the year. He remembers his covenant promise even when it seems we forget about him. Let us give thanks to the Lord with our whole hearts for his gracious mercy toward us, poor sinners who are so often unfaithful to him.

— Second Reading – Galatians 4:4-7 —

The fullness of time has already happened and continues to occur. God sent his Son into the world when it was best prepared to receive a Savior, when the world was best prepared to spread the good news. Yet the story continues. God is still breaking in on lives at just the right time. When people are under the yoke of the law, feeling the great weight of their guilt—in the fullness of that time, people may finally hear the gracious word and know they have been adopted into the family of God.

— Gospel – Matthew 1:18-25 —

As far as I know, I went home with my mother a few days after I was born. A few years later, we moved to a new house, but we never had to flee for my life. No angel warned my father that the president was seeking my life. Yet here is the baby

*But when
the fullness
of time had
come, God
sent forth his
Son, born
of woman,
born under
the law,
to redeem
those who
were under
the law,
so that we
might receive
adoption as
sons.*

Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus' infant life being sought by a king. He not only wanted to kill the baby, he wanted to "destroy" (v. 13) the Savior King.

After a while, in another sort of "fullness of time," when King Herod had died, it was safe for Jesus and his family to return to the land of Israel. But then Herod's son reigned, and Jesus may still have been in danger. So Joseph was warned again, and the family withdrew to the north, to Galilee, so that Jesus would be safe and so prophecy would be fulfilled.

Jesus went through so much travail, even in his earliest days, just to be the Savior of the world. I think I would have given up in infancy.

— The Common Thread —

Herod literally carried out the law's punishment (Romans 6:23) by killing the newborns. But Christ fulfills the law itself, redeeming us by his own death so that we may live. Though we are not worthy of the redemption that God has purchased for us, we are expected to live up to our redemption. God expects us to be grown-ups who do not need to depend upon the law to manage our lives. We are to live through the Spirit of grace. It disappoints God when we do not do so. So as children of God, we must remember again and again his gracious mercy. How may we better do so than by partaking of the food of those who fear, love, and trust him? He has provided food so that his wondrous works may be remembered. In that holy meal his covenant is remembered forever.

Fear Not

Find the 31 bold words from Matthew 2:13–16 KJV.

C B E T H L E H E M N E M B W
O E Y S C H P P T B S J O N E
D R E H T O M B D A K D C I L
R L I S Y Y C T S E E K K G S
H L O E O H V P Z Z S D E H O
D T A H X N T Y L I D T D T J
A R O K E H A G A O D H R W V
S R B R M B K E R E U D L O F
V E I F W K E E L A E R E N Y
T B E S U N H L H P X W G R Y
Q W O L E C I P A L I T N U A
D L O C F F E R D S F K A S T
W Q L U L S T Y E G D R E A M
Z L B U O E P R O P H E T U K
A Z F J D C H I L D R E N N T

And when they were departed, **behold**, the **angel** of the **Lord** appeareth to **Joseph** in a **dream**, saying, “**Arise**, and **take** the young **child** and his **mother**, and **flee** into **Egypt**, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for **Herod** will **seek** the young child to **destroy** him.” When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by **night**, and **departed** into Egypt: And was there **until** the **death** of Herod: that it might be **fulfilled** which was spoken of the Lord by the **prophet**, saying, “Out of Egypt have I called my **son**.” Then Herod, when he saw that he was **mocked** of the **wise men**, was exceeding **wroth**, and sent forth, and **slew all** the **children** that were in **Bethlehem**, and in all the coasts thereof, from **two years old** and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.