

Finding Home Away from Home



Advent 2020

“PEACE”

Matthew 2:13-19

Displacement in the Christmas Story

Last week we saw how Mary and Joseph had to leave home and how God met them in the manger
Today we observe the Holy Family disrupted and fleeing to Egypt to escape scheming King Herod
We are telling these stories to keep perspective in these disorienting days of the pandemic

Matthew's Narrative Design

Writing to a Jewish audience to authenticate Jesus as the promised Messiah of the OT

Notice the frequent use of identifying events with fulfilled prophecy

Linking Jesus to the prophecy of the second Moses: **Deuteronomy 18:15**

The 40 day wilderness temptation, feeding the 5,000, two storm-calming stories

The slaughter of the innocents clearly connects to Pharaoh's edict against the Hebrew first-born children

The flight to Egypt links Jesus to Israel as God's "son": **Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1, Proverbs 30:4**

Jesus will be all that Israel was supposed to have been: faithful, obedient, lights of blessing to the ends of the earth

All of this characterizes Jesus as the kind of Savior who will bring a new exodus from slavery (of sin): **Matt 1:21**

In this way our story points us to the good news of peace with God: **Romans 5:1**

The Wisdom of Fleeing

Usually we identify fleeing as an act of cowardice

But sometimes fleeing from an enemy/problem/trouble is the wisest course of action

All battles involve both engaging and invasive maneuvers. **1 Timothy 6:11-12**

David fights Goliath (**1 Samuel 17**) but flees from Absalom (**2 Samuel 15**)

Elijah fights against the Baal prophets (**2 Kings 18**) and then flees from Jezebel into the desert (**2 Kings 19**)

Jesus demonstrates a pattern of engagement and withdrawal/retreat (e.g. **Matt 14:13**)

Applicable principles: when to flee, when to stand and fight!

- When God tells you to run, run, when God tells you to stand and fight, fight.
- As a rule, flee temptation: **Genesis 39; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Cor 10:12-14**
- When you are unprepared to fight, better to withdraw and prepare first: **Luke 14:31-32**
- If someone vulnerable depends upon you, stand for their sake.

Fleeing and Fighting: Finding Peace in a World Full of Enemies

Until all things are made new, Thou preparast a table before me in the presence of my enemies: **Psalms 23:5**

The great tragedy of the massacre at Bethlehem reminds us of the jagged edges of a splintered world

Remembering **WHO** the real enemy is: **Ephesians 6:12**

Remembering the key victory over that enemy has already been **WON: 1 Corinthians 15:54-57**

Remembering Emmanuel (God **WITH** us): **Matthew 1:23; 28:16**

Remembering that God can take all things and make them **WORK** together toward good: **Romans 8:28**

Resisting One of the Cruel Psychological Tricks of the Pandemic

Seeing the movers last week first as contagion carriers, then as people

A growing sense that everyone is my enemy

The objectification of others as an extension of the virus

Thinking of my mask as more protection for others as from others

The reputation of the early Christians as those who stayed and helped

The explosive growth of Christians in the early Roman Empire

See Rodney Stark's ***Rise of Christianity***

The Parable of the Last Leaf

Philippians 4:11-13

"I am the very last leaf to leave
because of something I believe;
that I can do all things through Him
Who gives me strength time and again.

Whether I'm clothed in summer green,
awash in the warmth of the sunlight's sheen,
or whether I'm dimmed down brown by cold,
ragged edged, grown fragile and old,

and though all the other leaves have fled
before the coming winter's dread,
I'm content to remain on high
as a sign of hope to the passerby.

My time will come to flutter down,
and then I'll embrace with grace the ground.
I can do all things, you see,
Through Jesus Christ Who strengthens me."