

Sermon Matthew 2:13-23 First Sunday of Christmas December 26, 2010

Today's Gospel is not an easy one to read. Just two days ago we heard the good news about Jesus Christ our Lord being born. We paused in joy as we all came to the stable of Bethlehem. And now just couple days later we read about Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus escaping to Egypt because of the evil king Herod.

On one hand we're experiencing stillness and peace on the other running and fear. "Why can't we just feel that peaceful calmness for the rest of the year?" The birth of Christ into our lives can bring peace but for sure it does not bring stillness. It does exact opposite. It makes us move and go out.

We can see this happening in today's Gospel. Right about the time when Jesus was born the Magi were on the move. Traveling long and dangerous journey just to greet the new born king. Shepherds in the fields did the same thing. They ran to Bethlehem to see what is going on. And when they found Jesus they rejoiced!

But there is another very significant event happening in today's text. When the Magi left an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and sent him out for a journey to take Mary and Jesus to safety. Couple days after Jesus was born He had to be protected from evil trying to destroy Him.

Every action brings a certain reaction. In the same way the birth of God's Son, in whom all goodness, love and peace were incarnate, provoked the reaction of evil. In Jesus Christ God became one of us to save us all. And that didn't make the devil happy. The next thing we hear about is the king Herod trying to kill Jesus.

It is the same way in our lives. The moment Jesus is born in our heart the devil is after us. (pause) For some reason we don't like to be talking about the devil and his works in our lives. It somehow makes us feel uncomfortable. But the fact is that he is real and very powerful and he strikes especially in places where Christ is born.

Herod heard about the birth of Jesus, just like the Magi. He could have gone and gave him honor and praise. Yet he didn't for he was overcome by evil. His heart rejected the invitation to welcome the new born king. He refused to give his life to the Babe of Bethlehem. And this led to very tragic consequences. His fear, jealousy, anger and thirst for power made him to do horrific things.

Many times we're as well overcome by fear, jealousy or anger. On our life journeys we selfishly long for power and money, comfort and security and many times we don't mind hurt others to get these things. Or, on the other hand maybe it is you who's getting hurt because of someone's ignorance and selfishness. It works both ways. And that is the point. The devil wants us to be caught in the vicious cycle of hurting others and getting hurt.

But this doesn't have to be your journey in the upcoming year. Because Jesus Christ was born for this exact reason! To bring healing where there is hurt. To bring peace where there is restlessness. To bring reconciliation where there is anger. To bring love where there is hate. And to bring life where there is death. Jesus Christ was born to move our lives forward. (pause)

But that of course doesn't mean that our journey will be always easy and simple. When an angel appeared to Joseph and told him to leave, we can imagine that Joseph **wasn't** full of peace and joy in that moment. Yet in faith he obeyed what the angel told him to do. He probably thought to himself: "When will this end? When am I going to be able to settle down, build a house, find a job and live a simple peaceful life?!" This was Joseph's plan before Jesus Christ was born. And yet God had a different plan for him. Not an easier one but much greater one; to take care and of the most precious gifts to the world. And while doing that God was always with him, being his guide, his protector, his comfort and strength.

Did God ask you to go on a life journey that you weren't exactly excited about? Did he call you to do something that required a big leap of faith? Or is your life right now in this moment a journey full of uncertainty, insecurity and fear?

Well God is speaking to us today through his Holy Gospel and He's telling us not to fear. For no matter what our life journey is like. No matter where will our steps in this new upcoming year lead us. As long as we in faith carry the new born Child of Bethlehem in our hearts, as long as we'll put our faith and trust into His hands, God is going to be with us! Just as He was with Joseph and Mary on their dangerous and uncertain journey to Egypt.

Let us always take comfort, peace and courage in this fact. Let us in faith step out into the world witnessing to all that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. This is our holy calling. Not to stay still, not to fear, not to doubt but together with Jesus proclaim God's name to all.

Amen