



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

December 30, 2007

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2

Second Lesson: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

### Protected by a Father's Love

Let's say you have a child with you and you are going to the store to return some gift you got last week. You park. You get out. You start walking in the parking lot and as you are walking you see a truck bearing down, going way too fast for in a parking lot, and you notice that your child isn't paying attention and has run out and is right in the middle of the path of the oncoming truck. What do you do? What kind of terror seizes you as you see that truck bearing down on your child? Would you be willing to throw yourself in front of that truck, push your child out of the way and be hit yourself? Can you imagine that after you started to jump if you slipped on ice and couldn't get there? Can you imagine how time would freeze as you saw the truck still coming and the terror that would seize your heart? In that kind of setting, as a parent you would probably do anything you could to protect that child, right?

As we consider God's Word this morning, we see God acting to protect his Son. We see Jesus protected by a father's love as the truck that was Herod was bearing down on Jesus to kill him because Herod perceived him as a threat. We see Jesus protected by a father's love from a sinner's rage, but also remember, we see him protected by his Father's love for all sinners' comfort.

We saw just a very brief description of this truck that was bearing down on Jesus. We are told that when they had left, that would be the Magi, the angel came and warned Joseph that the truck was coming. The angel told him that Herod was going to search to kill the child, so get up and go, get up and go now and take the child to Egypt. That is what Joseph did. Can you imagine what that scene was like as he woke up Mary and had Mary get the baby and he said, "Let's go. We are leaving right now for Egypt." Can you imagine the discussion they must have had? Can you imagine what it would take to do that? Not just to say, "Well, let's wait and leave in the morning. We have to pack yet. There are a lot of things we have to do. We have to let people know we are leaving. We have to do this. We have to do that." Think of the hundreds of excuses for not doing what God had said. Think of the faith it took for Joseph to get up and do what God said. To get up and leave that night and take your child to a new place, your new family down to a new area and live there for awhile. I can't begin to imagine what that would be like.

It's one of those things I read in Scripture and think to myself, "Boy, I hope the Lord doesn't ask me to do some of those things." I don't know if I would have the strength of faith to do some of these things. Think of how many excuses I can come up with for not doing what God says is the right thing to do. Does that ever happen to you? You know

what God wants you to do, you know God wants you to speak up to a friend or a loved one and say, “what you are doing is wrong. Turn back and turn to God and find forgiveness in Christ.” But think of the hundreds of excuses you and I can come up with for not doing what we know to be right.

That’s what amazes me about Joseph in this setting. We don’t hear a lot about him, but we see the human father’s love for his child, the child he is raising even though its not his child so to speak, but to protect his child, the one God has placed into his care. He got up in the middle of the night and he did what God had told him through the messenger, the angel. He took the child to Egypt and they stayed in Egypt until that day came when an angel said again, “It’s time to get up and go back. The one who was going to kill him is dead.” So that is what Joseph did. The Lord acted to protect his Son so that his Son would not be killed.

It sounds really natural right? A father protecting a child from death, God sending the angel to Joseph and then Joseph getting up and doing it because of what he realizes is at stake. But what becomes truly fascinating to think about is that this goes way beyond just what you and I can understand. It’s much more than a father protecting a child from death. This is the heavenly Father protecting a child from the wrong death at the wrong time. This is the heavenly Father protecting Christ so that the time could fully come, not only for him to be born of a woman, but to live under the law and then to die in our place to redeem us from all of our sins. This is the Father saying, “You are going to have to die, my Son, but it’s not right now and it’s not at this place and it’s not at this time.” It’s the Father saying, “I am going to save you now so that you can die a little later.” Can you begin to fathom that kind of love that God must have for you and for me and what he is putting himself through?

God does all of this and protects Christ at this point and at that time so that Scripture can be fulfilled. The Scripture that says “out of Egypt I called my Son,” the Scripture that says, “He will be called a Nazarene”—Nazareth is an area, but it is also the Hebrew word that talks about “branch.” Think of how the prophet said “a branch will come from the stump of Jesse.” He protects and he delivers him so that he could grow up into that shoot that would save us. God acts to protect us from our sins. You and I who deserve hell, you and I who don’t deserve to be protected, you and I who deserve God’s full and complete wrath more than smoke, more than thunder, more than a trembling mountain, hell itself, God protects Jesus so that he could die later to take away our sins. His love for you and me overcame his love for himself or his own Son. God delivered Jesus so that all of Scripture could be fulfilled, not just “out of Egypt, I called my son and he will be called a Nazarene,” but that “all nations on earth will be blessed through Abraham’s offspring” so that the serpent’s head would be crushed, so that all those pictures of blood that would be shed to pay for sins throughout the Old Testament would find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

It was for you and for me that he protected Jesus from Herod. It was for you and for me that he delivered Jesus to Egypt and brought him back from Egypt and brought him to Nazareth and raised him and had him grow and then had him carry out his entire ministry. It was for you and for me. The child that God pushed out of the way of the

oncoming truck is you and it's me. That's his love for us. He himself, God, was run over by that truck so that we could be delivered.

You and I might go through life and as we face difficulties and as we face challenges, we might question whether or not God truly loves us. We might even be convinced by Satan that God doesn't love us or he doesn't love us the way we think he should or whatever the case may be. When those times come, acknowledge them as sin, that we doubt God when we have no reason to, but then flee back to this incredible picture. God loves us so much that he himself died so that you and I might stand holy and perfect in his sight, so that you and I might be able to lift up our heads at his Second Coming, so that you and I might know for a certainty that when we are called out of this world, we are going to heaven—no ifs, ands or buts.

That is why God acted in love. That's why the Father, in his love, protected Christ. And that's why we can be confident the Father, in his love, will always be with and protect us. Because his love is perfect, his love is complete, and in Christ, his love has been accomplished for us.