

Title: "Out of Egypt"
Text: Matthew 2.13-15
Theme: God's detailed plan
Series: Matthew #4
Prop Stmt: God is carrying out the details of his plan for his people. Will you trust him?

The sermon has one big point and 3 applications of that big point. The big point has two aspects to it which I think you will find not only interesting, but in a spiritually-intellectual way, I think you will find it satisfying and perhaps even a bit amazing as you see different pieces of "his story" come together in a way that you have not seen before. At least that is what I discovered this week in my study. I am continually surprised by God and I hope to bring some of that surprise into the pulpit so that your confidence in God, your satisfaction in God, your joy in God and your anticipation of complete delight in God is wondrously expanded in your heart.

Read Text:

A good story not only has a plot that is woven through the narrative, but there are sub-plots that are included and are being explored and resolved along the way as well. In order to engage the reader, the author will tell you about something that at the moment may seem a bit random, or may be a tension that is not resolved and the reader is left hanging, for now. A good story will resolve those tensions. A good author will tie pieces together that you did not even imagine would go together in such a way, that you are given some "aha" moments. Now, in order to have some "aha" moments, you have to experience the tension that comes from not knowing how everything is going to fit together. This element of mystery or tension in a movie has led to a few conversations with Cathi and I that go like this:

Cathi - "Why did that just happen?"

Me - "I don't know."

Cathi - "That was there on purpose. There was a reason for it."

Me - "Maybe, don't know."

Cathi - "Replay that, because I don't understand why that was there."

Me - "Holy cow! Can't we just watch the movie? They don't tell you everything upfront. It will make sense.

...60 minutes later...

Cathi - "See! I told you that was important and you didn't believe me."

Me - "Are the Red Wings playing?"

Nowhere is this seen more than in the Bible. What's more the unanswered questions are more than just good writing and effective drama. God weaves clues into the story that in some cases are mysteries that are waiting to be solved, while in other cases, he does things that in the moment were significant, but no one knew how so.

This is really on display in these three verses. The first two and half verses simply give us the facts about what happened. Christ as a child was in danger and Joseph and Mary did not know it. So, God sent an angel to tell Joseph that he had to take Mary and the child and flee to Egypt because Herod is about to search for Jesus in order to destroy him. Joseph immediately acted upon the revelation that he was given and saved the life of Jesus. And while the text does not say it, we can rightfully conclude that the gifts that the magi gave them provided the money that they needed to be able to make the trip and live in Egypt. So, what do we learn from this? 1) God is faithful to protect his Son and he will protect you from danger, even when you do not know it. 2) If God tells you to move, you better do it. 3) if God tells you to go somewhere, he will provide the resources to get you there. And that, my friends, would make a nice little sermon. The problem is, that's really not the point of the text. The last half of v.15 puts this whole deal on its ear. And in so doing, it opens up to us, a scene of profundity and amazement. But, it is more than good storytelling. God is helping us understand how important Christ really is to this world. He has been preparing the world for this moment because of what Christ came to do. God raised up the nation of Israel in order to bring Christ to the world. God loved Israel, like he loved his Son and treated Israel like he treated his Son. However, where Israel failed to love God, Christ did not fail.

Matthew's account of the life of Christ is written with a specific goal in mind. Everything that he includes is to help his audience understand that goal. He wants you to see that Jesus is the King, the Messiah of Israel. So, when Matthew writes about the birth of Christ, he focuses on five aspects of the story that show that Christ fulfilled the OT promises and prophecies of the king who was coming. This text is the 3rd one of the 5. But, this brings up an interesting wrinkle. The 3rd and 4th prophecies do not sound like prophecies in the OT. What Matthew sees, under the direction of the Spirit of God, is that everything that happened in the OT points to Christ in some fashion. It may not be explicit, but it only adds to the idea that Christ really is the hero of the Bible. So, why does Matthew see the trip to and from Egypt as being more than simply running for their lives? After all, there was a large concentration of Jews who lived in Egypt during this time, perhaps up to a million, so it was not unusual for a Jew to go there. But, the angel specifically directs Joseph to go there, because there is more to it than that. And that is what I want you to see.

The last half of v.15 is taken from the OT prophet, Hosea. Hosea married a prostitute who shortly after they were married was unfaithful to him and eventually left him. What she thought was going to be freedom was in reality bondage, and she ended up so messed up, and in so much debt that she sold herself in the market as an indentured servant. She would be owned by the highest bidder. The highest bidder that day, was Hosea. God told him to do it, because God wanted Israel to know that this is how much he loved her. The very life of Hosea was an illustration of the message that he preached and wrote. In Hosea 11, Hosea is speaking on behalf of God about Israel and how much affection God has on his people. Hosea 11.1 reads, "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*" The rest of the text takes us into the very heart of God and shows us the compassion of God and the

longing of God for his people, who insist on rebelling against him and following idols. The language is the heart-wrenching cry of a guy who loves his wife even though she keeps going out on him every night. He knows that he has to do something about it, but he really has no desire for justice. If she would just repent, he would gladly take her back. There are different images and analogies that God uses. In Hosea, Israel is portrayed as the unfaithful wife and has the ungrateful and rebellious son. The point is very clear. God has deep affection for his people.

But, this idea of Israel being God's son is not unique to Hosea. In Exodus 4 God instructed Moses what to say to Pharaoh. (v.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.'"* So, now the picture begins to become clearer. Israel was to God, like a firstborn son. Israel was to be the people who would enjoy his favor and inherit his blessing. Israel was supposed to honor, esteem, love and follow their father, like a firstborn son. God was prepared to shower Israel with incredible blessing, but Israel rebelled and in her rebellion she brought shame and reproach upon the honor of God. We see hints of this in her complaining before and after the dramatic rescue at the Red Sea. Then we see this rebellion in full force at the foot of Mt. Sinai, when the people break the covenant with God and create an idol and begin to worship it. Her continuing rebellion results in her wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before she is able to inherit her land. All of these experiences; exile in Egypt, wilderness isolation, trial and temptation are part of what it means to be an Israelite. If you, or your ancestors did not experience this, then you just can't identify with these people.

But, there is another related theme that is clearly obvious. Look at the similarities between Moses and Christ. Moses and Christ lived at a time when the king of the land was trying to kill the boys. Moses and Christ had to flee the land of their birth because the king wanted them dead. Moses and Christ were rejected as leaders by their own people. Moses was the founder of the Israelite covenant and Jesus was the founder of the New Covenant. So, now we are ready to see why Matthew included this.

Big idea: 1) **Israel's experience in Egypt was ordained by God to prepare them for the Messiah because they could see how their King was truly one of them.** At the same time, 2) **Christ's experience in Egypt was ordained by God to fulfill his mission to be the perfect representative for his people.**

Christ identifies with Israel. He is one of them. Christ lived what Israel experienced. He survived an attempted holocaust. He lived in Egypt in exile. He lived in the wilderness for 40 days (vs. 40 years) and was tested. He was raised in their land, ate their food, went to the Temple and experienced the customs and the holy days. He was the Son that Israel was not. Christ fulfilled Israel's purpose. He did for them what they could not do for themselves. And along the way, Christ personally knew and deeply felt what it was like to be Israel. No one of his people could accuse him of not knowing. So, not only did Christ experience their history, but this also means

that God called Israel to go into and out of Egypt and into the wilderness where they were tempted in order to prepare them to know and accept Christ as their Messiah. They were being prepared by God to see that this king was uniquely prepared to be their Savior. This King experienced their history. He was there and he lived it. And not only that, but this Christ was not just their Messiah, He is the King of the Earth. Israel will never have a leader who loves her more and cares for her more than Jesus.

Therefore, the rejection of Christ, by his own people, is the greatest injustice, and the most grievous, heart-breaking, judgment-incurring choice that has ever been made in the history of the world, apart from Adam's sin. The rejection of Christ by his own people will only be heightened by the fact that Israel will, according to Daniel 9.27, make a covenant with the Antichrist, which will begin the 7 years of tribulation on the earth. It is like a girl, who rejected the love of a prince who would care for her and protect her, but instead gave herself to an angry, unfaithful man who beat her, tormented her and abused her. Here is a king who was so humble that he lived among his people and experienced life the way they did and at the same time was a Savior who in living these experiences never failed. He never failed. He believed God, even in the darkest point of the trial. He embraced God's plan even when it cost him his life. And he did that because Christ really trusted His Father and His Father's plan. By his faith and obedience Christ fulfilled all righteousness. And therefore he lived in the place of every single person who would trust in him, because every act of righteousness, every response of faith, every obedient thought and word, were done to provide perfectly complete righteousness for sinners. But, what did all of this perfection get him? It seemed that all that he got was rejection. His perfection enraged the self-righteous because it revealed that they were not righteous. His living a perfect life in our place resulted in him being condemned to die, because sinful humanity could not handle living in the presence of perfection. And so, he died. Yet, like Joseph whose brothers sold him into Egypt, what they meant for evil, God overruled for good. The rejection, condemnation and execution of Christ was the full and complete sacrifice for our sins.

Matthew saw that. He saw that Jesus had to go to Egypt in order to identify with his people, so that he could perfectly represent them. When Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt he was fulfilling God's plan for his Son to be identified with his people.

Application:

1. **There is more to the story than you know.**

a. **It was true for Joseph (OT)**

Joseph, the 11th son of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his brothers in order to go to Egypt where he would suffer further injustice, be imprisoned, suffer further injustice, only to rise to the level of 2nd in command of the Egyptian empire. His position of power enabled him to provide rescue for the very people who rejected

him. Joseph saw the sovereignty of God, even over the evil decision of his brothers and said to them, *"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."* (Gen. 50.20) But even in that, Joseph had no idea, that his exile in Egypt was only pointing the exile of another who would suffer the ultimate injustice and would provide the ultimate rescue, even for the very people who condemned him to die. There was more to the story than Joseph knew.

b. It was true for Israel

The people of Israel had to go to Egypt, or die in their land. But, that necessity became an opportunity for a new Pharaoh to subject them to slavery. Their rejection as a nation and the attempts at destroying them became the means that God used to forge them as a nation. Suffering tends to bring people together. But, there was more to this than enriching them at the expense of their masters when they left, or destroying the economy of Egypt and its army, thus rendering the world's superpower completely impotent and removing a threat to this fledgling nation. There was more to this story than what anyone would imagine. 1400 years after they were in Egypt, God would send the Redeemer to walk those same roads, but to do for them what they were incapable of doing for themselves.

c. It was true for Moses

Moses realized that his rejection by his own people enabled him to come back and rescue them from bondage. But he had no idea that the deliverance that he led was only a preview of the ultimate deliverance that would come from Christ.

d. It was true for Hosea

This prophet had a disastrous marriage due to no fault of his own. Why would God put this man through this? The immediate answer was because God used his life and marriage as a compelling illustration of God's covenant love for his people. But, like all of the others, there was more to the story. God not only used Hosea to show his people the covenant love of God, but Hosea wrote the line, "Out of Egypt I called my son" never realizing that he was pointing to the greatest demonstration of covenant love the world would ever see.

e. It is true for you.

In every one of these situations, there was an immediate purpose and an ultimate purpose. Now, in the moment no one knew why they were experiencing such suffering and hardship. Even the immediate purposes were not immediately known. Joseph was in Egypt for several years before he realized why God had him there. Moses lived 80 years before he saw some of his purpose realized. Israel was in bondage for 430 years. But, even seeing some purpose realized, they never saw the ultimate purpose accomplished. Neither do we. You are coming out of a trial, or

going through a trial or going into a trial. You may not see what God's purposes are. But He has them. Some are immediate and some are ultimate. There is always more to the story than you know.

2. **God tells you what you need to know.**

When the angel from God spoke to Joseph in that dream, he did not give him a lesson tracing the biblical theme of exile and rescue from Egypt through the Law and the Prophets, demonstrating how this dominant motif set up a wonderful argument as to why it would be important for Joseph to consider taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt on their next family vacation so that Jesus could get in touch with his roots and feel a sense of connectedness with his legal ancestors in order to fully immerse himself into the Jewish experience. Oh No! The angel said, Get out! Now! That is all that Joseph needed to know. And this is clear: God knew all about Herod. Long before Herod was born God ordained this entire plan. Herod never threatened God's plan.

God tells you in his Word, what you need to know and how you need to respond, in the midst of your trial, even if that means you have to change plans and surrender dreams. God does not tell you everything there is to know. God does not tell you everything that He knows. He simply tells you what you need to know. And you need to know that he knows. He knows that he knows and he knows that you don't know all that he knows. Will you trust him or will you try to demand that he tells you what he knows so that you can decide whether that is good enough reason for you to trust?

3. **Later, it will make sense.**

It will not only make sense, it will amaze you. Eternity is going to be full of "aha moments." Your acts of faith, seemingly small, suspiciously insignificant are in reality, accomplishing the gloriously Sovereign and delightfully joyous plan of God. It will make sense and it will be all good.

Here is what you need to know and surrender to: God's plan is more important than your comfort right now. I do not say that with coldness, but with great compassion. Because there is another aspect to this: The delight and sweetness of God's plan is infinitely more glorious than your comfort right now.

Therefore, here is what you can anticipate. God may not save you from the trial, but he will save you through trial. He did that for his Son, and does that for all his sons.

Conclusion: Will you trust him?