

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

There was a “safe space” created at Brown University back in 2015. The room was equipped with cookies, coloring books, bubbles, Play-Doh, calming music, pillows, blankets and a video of frolicking puppies, as well as students and staff members trained to deal with trauma. Why did they create a safe space? There was a debate that was going to take place on campus and some of the students were troubled over the topic. So it was thought that if they could retreat to their safe place then they wouldn't be overwhelmed with fear over the debate.

Herod had a different version of creating a safe space for himself. He was troubled over the word that another King of the Jews had been born. So he tried to eliminate the competition and sent his henchmen to go to Bethlehem and slaughter all of the baby boys there two years old and younger. God warned Joseph in a dream to take Mary and baby Jesus down to Egypt to find safety there.

If I were Joseph I probably would have said, “What? You want me to leave in the middle of the night and run to Egypt? Why don't you just put Herod to death? We have settled in this house here in Bethlehem. Things are going fine. Can't you make life a little easier for me here? Why do we have to go to Egypt? We don't know anyone or anything there.” But we hear NOTHING from Joseph - no complaints - no questions - only action. What faith! Joseph is an amazingly compliant and yet silent servant of God.

This is a lesson for us - not only in how Joseph responds, but also in how God works. He lets evil people be evil, He allows His people to suffer and to be inconvenienced and have to run and hide, and by all earthly reasoning it would appear that evil is winning the day. Yet in the midst of the fear and the flight God still rules. How do we know? Because His Word and promises are still fulfilled and His will to save is still accomplished! What a lesson for faith.

Look also at what God used to protect Jesus! He used a heathen government and a foreign land to provide a place to house and feed His child - the same place where the Israelites were enslaved years before! Why did He do this? First and foremost of all, it was safe. There was no longer a murderous Pharaoh who wanted them dead, and Herod had no jurisdiction there. From a spiritual aspect, there may have been some remnants of Israelites living there through the centuries. But there was no temple there. There probably weren't any synagogues there either. Yet God didn't say, “I will never use such an unholy place to house my child.” God did the same thing with the Israelites during the famine back

in Jacob's and Joseph's day. He also used the Babylonians to take care of Daniel and many other Israelites when they were brought into captivity. What does this teach us? Sometimes God uses some pretty unusual people and seemingly dirty places to do His work for His people. Don't think that God can't or won't do this yet today! You never know how God will work in the most mysterious and weakest of ways.

It makes me think of a wonderful term that Paul used when He describes how Jesus rules over everything in our world. He says in Ephesians 1:22, "**God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.**" It's those last three words - "FOR THE CHURCH" that ring in my ears. Even though everything is dirty and polluted with sin and even though everything is going from bad to worse and there seems to be no turning around of our society, it is STILL, in its own dirty way, serving the church under Jesus' reign. Even when we elect bad and evil people to office, it doesn't mean that God can't use that wicked person to bring people to come to faith in Him or strengthen our faith in Him. I don't know how. But somehow He does these things. He promises to do this. We see it happen in Jesus flight to Egypt and back. God's promises in Christ always come true.

These promises aren't only for us, but also for those who will become us. We are struggling with this in our synod with school vouchers in Wisconsin. Right now the government in Wisconsin is willing to help pay students to go to our Lutheran grade schools and high schools under what is known as a school choice program. It has led to many poor and underprivileged children from broken families being able to go to schools like St. Marcus in inner city Milwaukee to hear the gospel. Think of that, the government helping to pay children to go hear the gospel. Yet this could still backfire on the church if the government decides to place regulations on how the Word is to be taught. It could turn sour real quickly, and that has many worried. Nonetheless, God could work that out for good too in His own way, teaching us not to rely on the government. He always works it out for our good. If God was willing to use the Egyptian government, then he could use the American one as well.

Think of the wonderful witness that Israel could have had while living among their Egyptian neighbors. When Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, Joshua said, "**The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.**" (Jos 4:23-24) It is interesting to note that when the Israelites were finally allowed to leave Egypt in Exodus chapter 12 that Pharaoh asked Moses to bless him before they left, and Moses also writes that the LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed to the Israelites. God never intended for only the Israelite people to be saved. He wanted all nations to see that He was the only true God who could save them. God has allowed us to stay in our own places as a witness to those we live around. He wants us to witness to those who are still in darkness. Imagine that you were being rescued from a burning apartment building, but you never took the time to sound the alarm or try to get others up to safety as well. Isn't

that why we are still here - to show others the light of Christ? And if God was willing to have Jesus to dwell in a foreign country like Egypt for a short time, then doesn't mean that Jesus wants to dwell in every heart through faith?

The prophecy emphasizes, however, that Jesus came OUT of Egypt. Why was it so important for Jesus to come out of Egypt? First of all, Egypt was never meant to be His permanent home. He was born as a Jew, called to born in Bethlehem, live under the law, and die in Jerusalem. The realm of His service was meant to be in Israel, not in Egypt. He wasn't called to live in safety. He was called to conquer sin, death and the devil. This was all predicted to happen in Israel. But He had to grow to be of age in order to do accomplish all that God called Him to do. Egypt was given as a temporary shelter of safety for Joseph and Mary to use so that Jesus could go back to His original goal of coming here in the first place.

As with Egypt, it is good for us to see that the One who was called out of Egypt has also called us out of this world into His. He calls us aliens and sojourners on earth, adopted into a different family and placed on a pathway to heaven as our home. Don't forget God's goal for you! He didn't baptize you to make you comfortable in this world. He didn't call you to be so entwined with your classmates and co-workers that they would have no clue that you are a Christian. Nor did He promise that you would have coloring books and cookies and Play-Doh to play with your entire life. As the Messiah was called to suffer, so are you. The actual Greek word for church is ekklesia which means "called out." You have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light, but in the meantime, don't expect living in a world of darkness to be fun or easy. Jesus said that we should expect to be attacked in this world. Isn't that half the problem with our Christians of today? We fall for this idea that life is about entertainment and fun. Even church has been turned into a bouncy house for some. We try to attract people to us by telling them we aren't different from them? Television preachers tell their listeners that God's purpose for them is to make them successful and prosperous? This isn't the purpose of calling us out - to make us warm and comfortable and safe and keep us the same.

The safe place that you have is in forgiveness of Jesus Christ. The safe place that you are given is in the promise of salvation and the resurrection of the dead. Every time your infants are baptized, you brought them to the safest place of all in Jesus and His righteousness. Every time you receive the Lord's Supper, you receive the body and blood of Christ, that which was used to make you safe in Jesus. Christians find their safety in God's Word and promises. Safety is found in the mercy of God in Jesus Christ crucified for the world and risen from the dead. This what you were called through and called to.

But let's get back to the text. Hosea originally wrote this to describe how God called Israel out of Egypt and treated the nation like a firstborn son. He took care of him and taught him how to walk. He fed Israel and protected him. Matthew looked back at that and said that He was also speaking of Jesus. What happened to Israel was a foreshadowing of what would happen to Jesus. The end game was

never in Israel as a nation, it was in Jesus. So everything that happened to Israel was meant to focus our eyes on the Messiah who would come from them. Abraham went to Egypt in time of famine, as did Jacob and Joseph and the Israelites. So also Jesus would go to Egypt. Joseph was sold into chains by his brother, as was Jesus. Elijah raised a widow's son from the dead, just as Jesus did. He fed a widow with a miraculous abundance of oil, as Jesus fed a crowd through a miraculous abundance of bread. You think of how the Israelites spent 40 years in a wilderness, and then Jesus spent 40 days in a wilderness. They fell into temptation and sin, Jesus didn't. There are so many things that happened to the Israelites in the Old Testament that end up being reflected in the life of Christ, you can't help but think that it had to be more than mere coincidence. Through the lives and action of Israel, God's firstborn adopted nation, God wanted us to see what would happen when His Only Begotten Son came. When we read the Old Testament, God wants us to see Jesus.

The point is, nothing happened by coincidence. Even as the Israelites were being made captive of Egypt and living in a foreign country, God would still make sure a remnant would end up in Israel so that the Messiah could be born in Bethlehem, just as He said. The same God who took care of Israel as a firstborn - yet rebellious son - would also take care of Jesus, His only begotten Son. Somehow, and in some way, God's promise stood firm. **Out of Egypt I called my Son.** What did He call Him to do? To go to Jerusalem to die. So even though Jesus ended up in Egypt and then in Nazareth of all places, He still ended up at the cross. Even though Israel had a strong part in crucifying Jesus, God still used that crucifixion to pay for the sins of the world and raise Him from the dead and He used that Gospel to reach out to the very people that crucified Jesus! Throughout all of these seemingly dark and weak places, God's Word proved to be strong, firm and true. Jesus, from Egypt and Nazareth to Jerusalem and the cross, was who God said He was. Jesus did what He said He would do.

This God is still the same. His Word and promises are still trustworthy. There is no safe place in a bottle of booze or a new home or a new job. There is no safe space for those who try to stand in His way! God rescued two million plus people from slavery under a Pharaoh who thought he was god! He got them out by putting Pharaoh and his army to death in the sea! This same God kept Jesus safe from Herod by sending Jesus into Egypt and then calling Him out. Herod ended up dying not too long afterwards. Most importantly, this same God brought Jesus back from the dead after having suffered the terrible death on the cross. He is who we know He is.

The same God who miraculously rescued them from Pharaoh has also called you out of the clutches of Satan. He has rescued you from the fires of hell. He has promised you that Jesus has come to live and die for you. No matter where you end up in life and what God allows to happen to you, His Word remains true. His plans are sure even when it seems that Satan has won the day. Jesus can bring you to Him through struggles with sin, the ravages of death, and even the temptations of the devil. Remain in Christ, continue to listen to His Word and promises, and you will be saved. As He has called Jesus out of Egypt, He has called you out of hell. So this same God says to you, **“Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.”** Amen.