

Matthew 2:13-23 After the Wise Men were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, because Herod will search for the child in order to kill him."

¹⁴ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵ He stayed there until the death of Herod. This happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Wise Men, he was furious. He issued orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside, from two years old and under. This was in keeping with the exact time he had learned from the Wise Men. ¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸ A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she refused to be comforted,
because they are no more.

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. The angel said, ²⁰ "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

²¹ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, had succeeded his father as ruler in Judea, he was afraid to go there. Since he had been warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee. ²³ When he arrived there, he settled in a city called Nazareth. So what was spoken through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene."

"Who Will Reign on David's Throne?"

In just a couple weeks, the Iowa Caucuses will be held and the presidential primary season will begin in earnest. Soon a clear frontrunner will emerge among those vying to replace Donald Trump as president of the United States. There's a dramatic aspect to this. We can't know the future, so until next November, we can only ask: Who will be our president? That's an important question for us to ponder, because the role and work of the president is so important to our nation.

There's also a drama presented in our text today. Here Matthew describes how Jesus escaped the effort of His earthly rival, Herod to kill Him and put an end to His Kingdom.

In considering this question, we recall that King David was Israel's greatest ruler. His life and royal career serves as a sign-post, pointing to the promised Messiah. The One who sits on that royal throne is no ordinary, earthly ruler. The Bible says that the throne of David is a throne which will last forever. WHO WILL REIGN ON DAVID'S THRONE? Who will be the reigning King of kings? 1. Not worldly usurpers. 2. But God's anointed Son.

In the second Psalm we read, "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.' He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision." See how what the Psalmist described centuries earlier is played out in our text. When the Magi from eastern lands came to pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews, Herod the King of Judea became alarmed. Naturally he wanted no challenge to his throne. Herod was an unpopular king and the people knew he had gained the throne by treachery. He was insecure, and now apparently, there was a rival - an infant boy in Bethlehem. Matthew writes, "After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will search for the child in order to kill Him.'"

One week ago yesterday, December 28, is the day when the Christian church traditionally marks what is called "The Slaughter of the Innocents." If a qualification for being a king is ruthlessness and brutality, then Herod was perfectly suited. To insure that Jesus would be eliminated Herod ordered the killing of every male child under the age of two within the vicinity of Bethlehem. Those baby boys murdered by Herod's orders are rightly called the first martyrs of the Christian church, and we do well to honor their memory as we consider the hatred which many hold for our Savior still today.

After Herod's death, his son Archelus followed him as king. Archelus inherited his father's contempt for Jesus and also sought to have Him killed.

This account leads us also to soberly identify inside ourselves that nature which was unrestrained in Herod, that nature which rejects the lordship of Jesus Christ and seeks to maintain mastery over our own lives. Christmas is more than just a pleasant break in the dreariness of winter. It's the celebration of the One who came to take over our lives. Do we permit that to happen, or do we insist on pursuing our own course, and follow our own desires, even when we know that conflicts with God's will?

We seek to place ourselves on the throne belonging to Christ when we put our trust in money or our own wisdom and strength; when we use His name in a careless way; when we neglect to hear His word; when we disobey our parents and the governing authorities; when we lust; when we gossip and slander others; when we covet or steal. Every sin against the 10 commandments is an attempt to pull God's Son from the throne and place ourselves upon it.

When Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation, they wanted to be as wise as God by eating from the forbidden tree. They wanted for themselves what belonged only to God. And so they fell into sin and became subject to death. All who challenge the Lord's authority as King do so at their own peril. Like Herod of Judea, all such attempts must fail and lead to sorrow and disappointment.

Who will reign on David's throne? No worldly challengers can ever succeed. Our text shows us that Jesus Christ rules and will rule despite any and all opposition. All the might and cunning of Herod could not succeed in finding and killing Him. Matthew writes, " Joseph got up, took the child and His mother during the night, and left for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod. This happened to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son.'"

The Lord had foretold that this would happen through the prophets of the OT. Many hundreds of years earlier Hosea spoke of God's chosen One being called out of Egypt. When Jesus and his parents returned from there, they discovered that it was not yet safe for Him in Judea. Archelus wanted to complete what his father attempted - he would kill Jesus. So, Matthew tells us, "'Since he had been warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee. When he arrived there, he settled in a city called Nazareth. So what was spoken by the prophets was fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazarene.'"

Whenever we read in the NT a fulfillment promised in the OT, we are reminded that God is in control of everything that happens. What God ordains must come to pass. In fact, everything about Jesus and His saving work was foretold long before it happened - His birth to a virgin mother in Bethlehem, His escape to Egypt and His youth spent in Nazareth, His betrayal and arrest, His agony and death on the cross and His resurrection - God promised that all of this would happen, and it did. Because God decreed the royal Kingship of His Son, no one could prevent it, not even Herod and all the others who hated Jesus and sought His life.

How fortunate for us that Christ assumes and holds the throne! How blessed we are to have such a King! Though He is truly God in human flesh, the maker and keeper of the world, He did not come to establish an earthly throne here in this world,

but to redeem the world by His humility and atoning death at Calvary. He told His disciples, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

He is the King who came not to crush His enemies, but to heal them and deliver them from the prison of sin. He announced, "I have come to seek and save that which was lost." He is a King who does not terrify His subjects with dreadful power, but consoles and encourages them with His word. Of Jesus Isaiah wrote, "He will not shout or cry out, or raise His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out."

He is the Sovereign King who came not to impose on His subjects a new law, but to ransom us from the curse of the Law. He came to lift from His people the crushing burden of trying to save themselves. He invites us, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

How blessed we are to be under the rule of King Jesus! One who feeds us and strengthens our faith by the Gospel, proclaiming in the word and in Baptism and in Holy Communion that He forgives us and promises bliss and peace forever in the Kingdom of heaven.

We should gladly and willingly place ourselves and our lives and plans and work under His care, for by His innocent death on the cross He has given us life instead of the death we deserved. St Paul wrote, "He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again."

Happy are all those who live under Him in His Kingdom. May God grant us grace to believe in Him as our only Lord and Savior, that He might rule our hearts and minds and bring us safely into His everlasting Kingdom! May He grant it for the sake of Jesus, the Son of David, King of Kings. Amen.