Sunday, 1/1/23

Matthew 2:13-23

13Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

16When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. 17Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 18“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

19When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” 21Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

Sermon

1. What we know about Matthew
   1. Very little—not much backstory given
      1. He’s a working class man in ancient Israel
      2. Jewish, and devout
      3. In the line of David, but poor and living under Roman occupation
   2. He’s at the center of this first part of the story: he helps bring Jesus into the world and protect him early on
   3. He’s acting on God’s direction, first to be husband to Mary and father to Jesus
   4. This week he takes Jesus to Egypt to protect him, brings him back when the threat passes, continues to protect him
      1. No insisting on his rights, no denial of the threat
      2. There’s no glory in this for him—he’s gone from the story after this passage, there’s no memoir
2. Violence and evil as the background of this story
   1. Herod, the powerful man who represents the Roman Empire
      1. Historians tell us he has killed relatives to hold onto his power (power corrupts)
      2. In today’s story he’s willing to kill a bunch of children to get rid of a perceived threat
   2. Violence in history/now
      1. Powerful people keep power, try to accumulate more (tech titans, Putin invading Ukraine, etc.)
      2. Violence when rights are asked for, evil and violence generally
   3. Where is God in this?
      1. The vague notion that God causes violence, but that’s not what the passage says
         1. Thus was fulfilled… Jeremiah predicted this, saw suffering for the deaths of innocents, but Herod (evil person) is the cause, not God
         2. Jesus, God but also human, is subject to death, has to flee (become an immigrant) to survive
      2. Joseph’s role
         1. He’s said to be “righteous”: he follows God’s guidance
         2. He acts to protect Jesus—it’s his responsibility to do this part of furthering God’s plan
   4. What do we do?
      1. Righteousness: doing God’s work
      2. Evil resists us, we resist evil