

The Difference Jesus Makes

Matthew 2:13-23 ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." ¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

I bought this loaf of stollen at the Piggly Wiggly the week before Christmas. It's alright. I didn't really have time to make stollen myself this year. Sometimes you have to make do with the store-bought stuff, but it's not as good. Home made makes a difference.

Our text shows a difference that is far more important. It reveals the difference between a life of faith and a life of fear. Look at what a difference there is between Joseph a man who lived by faith and Herod a man who lived in fear. It shows us what a difference Jesus can make.

Joseph was a man of faith with regard to God's Word.

Joseph was a man of faith, and being a man of faith, his life is summed up in one word: obedience. Because he trusted God he was not afraid to do what God commanded.

The angel appeared to him and told him to go to Egypt and that night without waiting and without preparation he left.

God appeared to him and told him to take Mary as his wife. He did.

God told him to name the child Jesus. He did.

The decree went out and he took his pregnant wife down to Bethlehem.
God tells him to go to Egypt and he went.
God called him back from Egypt and he came back.
What God said, Joseph did.

He trusted God and God's word. When God spoke, Joseph listened. Why? Because he trusted God.

You might think, "Well yeah an angel appeared to him of course he listened."
But remember Zacharias, an angel appeared to him and he didn't listen. Or remember Lot, two angels appeared to him, and he didn't listen. It's not the messenger that makes the difference. It's what's in the heart. Jesus lived in Joseph's heart through faith and Joseph trusted God's word.

It didn't matter to Joseph if that word came from an angel or a preacher or written word. The messenger was not important. Jesus makes the difference.

Joseph was a man of faith with regard to earthly treasure.

The bible doesn't tell us how much gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the wisemen gave Jesus, and so it's impossible to know how much it was worth, but the clear impression is that these were very valuable gifts. One commentator insists that these gifts would have been worth at least the equivalent of two million in modern value. What would you be thinking if the wise men gave your family such valuable gifts? We don't know what Joseph was thinking but we know what he did and that is enough.

Whatever he may have been thinking God appeared to him and said, "Joseph you are to use those gifts to flee with your family to Egypt." Maybe Joseph was hoping to build a beautiful new home for his family, but at the word of God he went to Egypt.

He was a man of faith and as a man of faith he felt no need to grasp, to cling, to hold on to this treasure or any other worldly treasure. He had Jesus and that was enough for him.

Herod is another thing entirely. Herod was a man who lived in fear and not in faith. He lived in fear that what he thought of as "mine" would be taken away from him.

"This is my kingdom and I'm not going to lose it to a child, even if I have to kill all the children in a village to keep it."

You see what a difference trusting Jesus makes. The difference is far greater than homemade stollen.

Hopefully none of us would slaughter a village to hold on to what we think of as mine, but we do tend to think more like Herod and less like Joseph. It's mine and I'm going to keep it. I've mentioned before those sea gulls from *Finding Nemo* "Mine, mine, mine, mine." That is who we are by nature. My pride, my life, my body, my choice, I can do what I want. It's mine and I'm going to hold on to it and do what I like with it.

That attitude leads to a life of fear. Fear of what we are going to lose.

It's not your life and it's not your body. Paul reminds us "You were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body"

When we attempt to grasp what is mine, we live in fear. When we live by faith we know that we don't have to grasp anything except Jesus. He has promised to provide everything else that we might need.

Hebrews 2:14-15 that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Rather than cling to the delusion of this is mine and live in fear of losing it, cling to Christ and live in faith knowing that God will provide

When I was looking for information on the value of the gifts of the wise men, I ran across a sermon on this same text that was all about how God wants to bless your life. After all look how God blessed Joseph with these riches.

There is some truth to that. God does bless us with more than we need. From the very beginning he didn't give Adam and Eve just what they needed but filled the garden with every good thing. There is some truth there, but it's the real missing the point. The real point is not whether or how much treasure the Lord fills our life with, the point is that what God really wants is to fill our hearts and our lives with Jesus.

Joseph was able to live by faith, trusting God's word, not needing to hold on to, or to grasp what is mine, because he understood the real treasure was Jesus. He held on to Jesus.

Receive a life of faith like Joseph.

The real purpose of today's text is to prove that Jesus is the true Son of God. The wise men knew. The star proved it. Herod feared it. The angels guide his father. The prophecies confirmed it.

In this short text Matthew reveals three Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus. The entire gospel of Matthew has ten, three of them are right here.

One of these prophecies from Hosea "out of Egypt I have called my son," is referenced to the nation of Israel in the book of Hosea. For Matthew to quote it here in reference to Jesus is a declaration that Jesus is Israel. He is Israel in one person. All prophecies and promises about Israel are ultimately prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.

Matthew leaves no doubt as to who this child is. He is the Messiah, He is Israel, He is the son of God.

These things are written so that you might believe and believing might have life.

Jesus is the son of God, knowing this means that we too can have a life of faith rather than a life of fear. We don't have to be like Herod grasping what is mine, always afraid of what I might lose. Instead, we can take Jesus with us out of the Christmas season into the whole year ahead, confident that He Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Unafraid of the journeys, dangers, and tribulations ahead, we walk boldly into the New Year with faith in Jesus.

He came to die. He came to die for your sin. He is the only thing worth holding on to. Jesus makes the difference. Amen