

**December 27, 2020**

**Sermon: “How Jesus Got to Galilee”**

**Reverend Derek White**

**Scripture: Matthew 2:13-23**

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.” So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 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.” When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Merry Christmas everyone. Today is the first Sunday of Christmas in our liturgical calendar. There are two Sundays of Christmas that encompass the twelve days of Christmas. We have just concluded Advent and the series on “What Are We Waiting For”.

The first week we focused on Hope as our first candle of Advent. The second week was on the message of Faith and Preparation in Faith Formation. The third candle of Advent represents joy. And the fourth candle of Advent focused on “Love”.

## **PART ONE: THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

We have just celebrated the birth of Jesus, this child of God for whom the world has been waiting, and the beauty and miracle of it all. I still find it a miracle how Joseph got Mary on that donkey while nine months pregnant. The journey for them was not an easy one. And after they arrive there is no room at the inn, so they are forced to sleep in the stable outback. One could say this is a terrible travel story with so many challenges. After a trip like that one might think how could it get any worse? But wait, Joseph receives word from the Angel that Jesus and Mary are endangered, and they have to flee to Egypt because Herod is looking for the child. Like 2020, how could it get worse? Yet there is hope.

Joseph is chosen to be a protector of Mary to keep her and the baby safe. And because Herod is looking for the child because he is a threat to the heir of King Herod, Joseph takes Mary and child and slips away to Egypt.

## **PART TWO: EXILE**

We don't know a lot about Jesus' life growing up. Yet the flight to Egypt puts Jesus in a special category we don't often think of, an exile. God came in Jesus to be fully human and to experience what we experience. And here is Jesus before he can even speak a word, a political exile. But it is part of the scriptures and prophecy that out of Egypt he would come.

It is believed that Jesus grew up in Alexandria in Egypt, which was a large city with a great education system in the Roman Empire. If he lived there until the age of four or five, he would have been exposed to many languages and teachings. Alexandria was a busy and bustling city. To think Jesus grew up in a large urban setting. He probably would have learned multiple languages like Greek, Latin, and others.

Jesus experienced the hardship of growing up in exile and being moved around to keep him safe. Yet through these hard experiences he would have been shaped by the challenges he faced in life. His faith formation would have been shaped by all the things he encountered growing up. Out of challenging circumstances there is faith formation. Through the journey in life, we learn lessons.

## **PART 3: FORMATION**

We are formed by the things we experience in life. And Jesus came to experience all that it means to be human. He had good days and bad days. He came to experience what it feels like to be loved and rejected. And even Jesus experienced the feeling of "it can't get any worse".

We know Jesus learned many things growing up. He learned to read. At age twelve he is taken to the synagogue where he reads the scrolls. He has a vast understanding of the scriptures. He is said to be the son of a carpenter or a carpenter himself. He learns skills to earn a living in life. Growing up in Egypt would have shaped him in many ways. He is raised like any other child. He has to learn from the challenges that are placed before him.

## **PART 4: MOVING TO NAZARETH**

It is said that the angel who had warned Joseph to go to Egypt with the child appears to Joseph a second time and tells him to take Mary and Jesus and return to Judea. Mary and Joseph are not believed to originally be from Nazareth. They probably were from Judea which would have been a larger town/city than Nazareth. But because Nazareth is a quiet, rural town they move there for safety reasons so that Herod's son doesn't discover the identity of Jesus.

Now Nazareth, in the area of Galilee, was a small rural town that was a farming and fishing community. It may be one of the reasons Jesus tells so many parables with references to farming and fishing in it. The scriptures say Jesus spoke Aramaic, which was not a common language at the time. It had not really been a spoken language for 200 years when Jesus was born but in rural areas sometimes languages like this survive and are still spoken. We know on the cross Jesus says “eloi eloi lama sabachthani” which is Aramaic for “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

## **PART 5: MANY PARTS OF JESUS**

Because Jesus has such a diverse upbringing of living in both cities and towns, having humble beginnings, overcoming adversity, and more it is possible for us to see a little bit of ourselves in Jesus. There is something about who he is that inspires all of us. He overcame adversity and challenges in life. And his resiliency gives us hope when times are hard in life.

God knows the challenges we face. God in Jesus shows us the understanding of the shared experiences. God knows what it feels like when we say, “well it can’t get any worse”. But God gives us hope. In Jesus we see the strength to overcome adversity and learn through challenging experiences. Jesus’s life was formed by challenges just like our life is formed by challenges.

## **CONCLUSION:**

What is remarkable in this journey story of Jesus is Joseph who was a man of faith who was tasked to watch over and provide for Jesus when he was most vulnerable. Joseph was tasked to be a guardian to care for Mary and Jesus. We don’t know a lot about Joseph in the scriptures. But God provided Joseph to be an important part of the story.

I will conclude with this. If we have the ability to take care of and provide for those who are vulnerable, we should be like Joseph and be guardians. If we have learned from the challenges in life to overcome adversity than we should share that with other. We should offer hope and encouragement when we can. Let us support one another through challenging times.