

Sermon for December 28, 2025 – 1st Sunday after Christmas

Matthew 2:13-23 (EHV)

God the Father protects His Child

- 1) From hell's raging.
- 2) From worldly danger.

¹³After 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."

¹⁴Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵He 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."

¹⁶When 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.

¹⁷Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸A 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.

¹⁹After 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."

²¹Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But 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. ²³When 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."

Heaven couldn't contain its joy when God's Son was born into the world to be our Saviour.

Hell, however, did not rejoice. Knowing that his time was short, Satan wasted no time looking for a way to destroy the Christ Child. Wicked King Herod's paranoia provided the perfect opportunity.

The LORD knew what the devil was planning and stood ready to protect His child. Why? Not only because He loves His Son, but because He loves you also. Because He sent His Son into the world to save you, the LORD made sure that nothing would prevent Him from fulfilling His mission.

With the account of Jesus' flight into Egypt as our guide, let us learn how **God the Father protects His Child**, 1) from hell's raging, and 2) from worldly danger.

Part 1: God the Father protects His child from hell's raging

Only 5 kilometres southeast of tiny Bethlehem loomed the Herodium - a lavish fortress built by King Herod. Herod was a ruthless and paranoid tyrant who believed everyone was plotting against him. He murdered many innocent people, including his own wife and sons.

Now you can understand why the Bible tells us that all Jerusalem was alarmed when foreign Magi started asking about the newborn King of the Jews. They were terrified of how Herod would react.

Herod told the Magi to report back to him once they found the Christ child so that he could worship him. The LORD, however, warned the Magi in a dream not to return to Herod because He was secretly planning to kill the Child. Obeying God, they went home by another route.

What Herod and Satan failed to accomplish through deceit, they now attempted through sheer brutality. Therefore, the Lord sent an angel 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. ¹⁵He 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."*

Notice how God protected His Son from hell's raging. He did not send a legion of angels to carry Jesus to safety. Instead, the LORD entrusted His Son to an ordinary, faithful man whom He chose to represent Him as Jesus' earthly father: Joseph.

Joseph stands as an example for every Christian parent or guardian. Just as he didn't have the power in himself to accomplish what God asked, but had to rely on God's gifts and direction, so do we.

Understand, then, that God doesn't expect you to be a "super" dad, mom, grandparent, or guardian over those God entrusts to your care. He simply calls you to be faithful. In the peace of Christ's forgiveness, learn God's Word and do what it says. Trust the LORD to use the gifts He gave you to accomplish His purposes as He graciously works through you to benefit those entrusted to your care.

Our text continues: 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. ¹⁷Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ¹⁸A 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.*

What a horrifying scene: children torn from their terrified parents and brutally murdered in front of them. Satan moved Herod to consider no slaughter too great in his rage against the Christ child.

Oh, how evil humans are when perceiving a threat to their lifestyle. Out of sheer selfishness, they willingly kill society's most vulnerable people. Not only do you see this truth play out in the actions of tyrants like Herod, Putin, or Boko Haram, but in our Canadian society as well, which will use abortion and mercy killing as an acceptable means to maintain a certain "quality of life." May the LORD have mercy on us all.

And the LORD showed mercy. He protected His Son from hell and Herod's rage so that Jesus could grow up, go to the cross, and win our salvation.

"But what about the other children?" You might ask, "Why didn't God save them from Herod's hand?" Even though the Bible doesn't answer that question for us, the LORD offers us a general promise to cling to when such calamities like this arise: He works in all things (including the evil we experience) for the good of those who love Him.ⁱ He also tells us this important truth in Scripture: *The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.*ⁱⁱ

Let's apply these words to the children Herod killed. Most of them (if not all) belonged to Jewish parents. Circumcision connected every Jewish boy to God's covenant with Abraham.ⁱⁱⁱ On top of that, the LORD emphatically commanded Jewish parents to teach their children about the LORD from infancy.^{iv} The Holy Spirit used His Old Testament Word and Sacrament of circumcision to create faith in the hearts of the martyred boys of Bethlehem, just as He uses His New Testament Word and Sacraments of Baptism to do the same today in young children. Therefore, we can be confident that the soul of each believing child is at peace with the LORD in heaven, where no evil will ever reach them again.

Parents, learn from this account! Bring your children for baptism right after they are born. Read, sing, and pray God's Word with them. The Holy Spirit promises to use these means to create and strengthen your child's faith in the LORD. Then, God forbid, if some illness, terror, or disaster takes away your child's life, you can be certain that your child's soul is at rest with your Father in Heaven and that you will be reunited with your child again when Christ raises the dead on the Last Day.

Part 2: God the Father protects His child from worldly danger.

Foolish Herod thought he had won, that his reign was secure. But all his raging was for nothing. God kept His child safe. And Herod... well, he died!

¹⁹After 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." ²¹Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus, Herod's son, had succeeded his father as ruler in Judea, he was afraid to go there.

Archelaus was as brutal as his father. He started his reign by slaughtering 3000 innocent people in the temple just to get at a few conspirators who were mixed in with the crowd! That news greeted Joseph upon his return, and it filled him with fear.

Since he had been warned in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee. ²³When 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."

Even though no one specifically targeted Jesus, Judea was filled with indirect dangers that threatened God's Son. That is why the Lord advised Joseph to move to Nazareth in Galilee, where Mary and Joseph had lived before Jesus' birth.

Because no one thought about looking for the Messiah so far from Jerusalem, Jesus could grow up in relative safety, removed from the political intrigue surrounding the capital city. There the LORD would keep His Son safe from all worldly dangers unto the time came for Jesus to fulfil the purpose for which He was born: to save us from our sins.

Yes, it's amazing to see how God's purposes always prevail: how He saved His child from hell's raging and worldly danger. Even more amazing is that the same protecting love God showed Jesus, He promises to show you, His adopted child through baptism.

Yes, just as Satan and the world raged against Jesus, so they also desire your destruction. But, just as God guided history for His Son, He also directs history to protect you.

Therefore, even if you suffer substantial loss or death for Christ's sake, as it happened to many families in Bethlehem, you can take comfort in the fact that Satan stands defeated before you. Jesus has won your salvation through His cross. Rage as He will, the devil can't do anything to change what Jesus has done. It is finished. Your sins are forgiven, and salvation is secure. God even promises to use all the evil things you experience in life for your everlasting good.

Therefore, don't fear terrorist attacks targeting Christians, natural disasters, war, or any other evil threatening your life. God loves you so dearly that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to save you. If He did that, you can be certain that He will keep His promise to deliver you from every evil attack to bring you safely into His heavenly Kingdom.

Yes, brothers and sisters in Christ, if God is for you, what can Satan and his allies do to you? Even though they threaten to hurt or kill your body, they can only do it for a time. God will raise you on the Last Day to enjoy everlasting life with Him in paradise. He will not allow anything to separate you from the love He has for you in Christ.

Rejoice, therefore, in God's promise to protect his holy children through faith. Live boldly in that confidence, to the glory of His name. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Romans 8:28-39

ⁱⁱ Isaiah 57:1,2 NIV84

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Genesis 17:9-13

^{iv} Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 & 2 Timothy 3:14-15