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First Sunday of Christmas
Sermons
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MATTHEW 2:13-23 - "OUT OF EGYPT"

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I sure you have heard of the saying, "History repeats itself." Events that have happened in the past seem to happen again and again. The particular people involved may be different, the time is certainly different, and the location may be different, but nevertheless the overall event or happening is the same. For instance in Europe of power hungry French man declared himself emperor and went on to conquer most of Europe for a time. However other powers in Europe banded together to put a stop to one they deemed a tyrant and Napoleon's reign came to an end. Then a hundred plus years later a power hungry Austrian seized power in Germany declaring himself the Fuhrer and he went on to conquer most of Europe for a time. However other powers in Europe and the world banded together to put a stop to one they deemed a tyrant and Hitler's reign came to an end. History repeats itself.

Salvation History, the history of God's dealings with humanity as found in the Holy Scriptures also repeats itself. God has consistently acted gracious and loving toward humanity throughout the ages from the time of creation, even through the Fall, the time of Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the time Moses and the exodus, throughout the entire history of Israel until the time of Christ. Humanity likewise has acted consistently since the fall in relation toward God and other people; we have acted out in rebellion against God and His Word and His ways; we continue to be selfish and unloving toward others. In other words continue to be sinners; we repeat our same old bad history over and over and over again. God's people sin and rebel against Him, yet He is gracious and merciful to save. History repeats itself.

In the days of Abraham, there was a famine in the Promised Land. So Abraham and company went down into Egypt for food. While there they got into some trouble with Pharaoh, but God delivered them and blessed them and Abraham and company returned to the Promised Land. Then some years later Abraham's grandson Jacob and company left the promised land and went down to the land of Egypt because there was a famine in land. God blessed Jacob and his sons in Egypt so that his twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel a numerous and great people. But over time in Egypt the people of Israel got into some trouble. A new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph came to power and enslaved the people of Israel. God again delivered Israel, this time from bondage through the working of His mighty hand in the exodus and God brought Israel again into the promise land. History repeats itself.

Despite all that God had done for Israel, despite the fact that God treated the Israel as His on son whom He loved and cared for, Israel continued to be a rebellious

and unfaithful child. History repeats itself indeed. God sent prophet after prophet to Israel to call His son, His people, to repent from sin and idolatry and return to trust in the Lord. But again Israel rebelled, so God warned through the prophets that God's wrath and judgment was about to be revealed through the armies of the Assyrians and Babylonians; they would take the people of Israel captive as God's punishment against His wicked son. Yet God remained ever the merciful and loving Father of Israel, for in the midst of speaking judgment, He sent the prophet Hosea to also speak words of promise and hope of deliverance and salvation based upon God's past saving acts. This is the context of Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, I love him, and out of Egypt I called My son."

St. Matthew quotes the second part of this verse from Hosea 11:1 and declares that it has been fulfilled in the baby Jesus, who was taken into Egypt along with Mary His mother by Joseph to escape murder by King Herod, and was likewise brought back to the promised land once Herod had died. ¹³ And after they withdrew behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph saying, "Rise take the child and His mother and flee into Egypt and remain there until when I say to you; for Herod is about to seek the child to kill Him. ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and His mother by night and withdrew into Egypt, ¹⁵ and He was there until the death of Herod; in order that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

St. Matthew is making this most important point to us: Jesus is not only God's divine Son conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, but Jesus is also Israel reduced to one; Jesus is God's faithful Son, whom God called out of Egypt, just like He had called Israel out Egypt in the past. Jesus is God's faithful Son, sent to redeem God's unfaithful son. God saved Jesus from death as infant, so that He could grow into a man and die as the faithful Son on the cross.

King Herod too was repeating history, an unholy history of sin and violence all too common in those who power and authority in this world. Herod was threatened by the news of one being born the King of Jews, because there can only be one king. Jesus was a threat to his reign so he sought to eliminate Him. King Herod wasn't going to take any chances any young male child in Bethlehem had to be killed. ¹⁶ Then Herod when he saw that he was put to shame by the magi he became very angry, and he sent (his men) to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and in all her borders from two years old and younger, according to the time which he ascertained from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled saying, ¹⁸ "A sound was heard in Ramah, weeping and much mourning; Rachel is weeping for her children, and she did not wish to be comforted, for there was none."

God spared His Son as a baby only to give up His Son as a man upon the cross. There upon the cross Jesus died as one despised by the leaders of Israel as a nobody from Nazareth. ¹⁹ And after Herod died behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ saying, "Rise take the child and His mother and go into the land of Israel; for those who were seeking the life of the child have died." ²¹ And he rose and took the child and His mother and entered into the land of Israel. ²² But when Joseph heard that Archelaus reign over Judea in place of His father Herod he feared to go there; and he was warned in a dream to withdraw into the region of Galilee, ²³ and he went and dwelt in the city called Nazareth; in this way what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled for He will be called a Nazarene. It was said that nothing good comes out of Nazareth and so the leaders of Israel rejected Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us in the flesh. The baby Jesus grew to be

despised and rejected as the prophets foretold, as a Nazarene, to complete history as the faithful Son of God dying for the unfaithful.

History repeats itself. The bad history of our first parents, Adam and Eve, repeats itself in us; like them we too have rebelled against God and His Word, like them we too have been unfaithful in every way. But this is not the only history that repeats itself. In Christ Jesus you and I have been given a new history, the history of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Jesus' history has become your history in Baptism. In Baptism you were given Jesus' name, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and a new birth by water and the Spirit. You have been washed clean of your sins and converted to faith from unbelief. You have been united to Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' history has thankfully become your history: Jesus died and we die with Him; Jesus rose and we rise with Him to newness of life; Jesus rose and we shall be raised on the last day.

Jesus is the faithful Son of God and in Christ Jesus, unfaithful as we are, we are counted as Sons and Daughters of God. Our daily life now is a constant repetition of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. This why the Church Year or Calendar is so important; it repeats the history of Jesus Christ the faithful Son of God. As we observe and celebrate the Church Year we relive the history of Jesus. For instance, now is the Season of Christmas. Now we remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us in the flesh. We remember that Jesus came as the Son of God in two senses: the divine Son conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary; and the faithful Son, Israel reduced to One, all for our salvation, to call you and me and all other sinners out from Egypt, out from the bondage of sin to a new Promised Land. History repeats itself. Out of Egypt I called My Son, Amen.