

1st Sunday after Christmas
“Christmastide prophecies fulfilled”
Matthew 2:13-23
December 28, 2025
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 1st Sunday after Christmas is from our Gospel reading, Matthe 2:13-23. Reread the first three verses.

“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.”

So far the text:

Do you like to watch action movies? What makes an action movie good? Well, if you google that, you'll get a very useful AI response about the key elements of a great action movie. There is a list of 8 key elements. I won't spend time listing all 8, but I'll mention the first three . The first is **“a strong relatable hero”** ... “that makes audiences root for them.”

And the second is **“Purposeful Action:** Fight scenes, chases, and explosions must advance the plot or reveal character, not just fill time.” You know, you got to have a chase scene ...that's not just thrown one in there, whether it's a motorcycle, a boat, a car...I'm sure a few you've seen come to mind.

The third is **“Compelling characters”** - including a memorable villain or antagonist.

Could the Christmas story be called a good action story?

Well, it certainly isn't boring. Sure, there aren't stunt scenes and controlled explosions and computer-generated images. But there is THE greatest relatable hero - the friend of sinners, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.

There is an important chase scene that unfolds – a flight into Egypt under the cover of darkness. And there is a terrible villain, King Herod, who seeks to destroy the Child Jesus.

Well, how did Mary, Joseph and Jesus make their getaway? A helicopter swooped in to get them? Well, there weren't helicopters of course. How about a fiery chariot like Elijah got into? Well, our bulletin cover shows Mary riding a donkey with Joseph and Jesus as they were escaping to Egypt. Not real high speed, compared to Herod's chariots. But, of course, the angel's warning gave them enough of a head start to make it safely.

The Bible doesn't actually tell us that Mary rode a donkey either to Bethlehem or away from it. A 2nd century non canonical writing called the protoevangelium of James depicts this mode of transportation, and thus the artwork.

Whatever the mode of transportation they used, God provided to protect them. The journey was funded by the treasures of the wise men whom God had directed to them...who were also warned by God to not return to Herod but go home another way.

But this was no leisurely trip to Egypt. There were being hunted down. Yes, there is a villain, a king used by the devil to kill Jesus, seizing a supposed opportunity over a defenseless baby.

But God, who knows the future, foresaw this desperate attempt, and prophesied that the safe-haven would be for a time in Egypt as we know from Hosea 11:1. **“Out of Egypt I called My Son.”**

The devil doesn't dictate the timing of the death of the Savior Jesus. He lays down His life when He determines the time is right.

So, as soon as Joseph was told by the angel in the dream to flee... he flees... they departed in the middle of the night.

I like a good action movie, but nothing on the big screen compares to real action that came to fruition at the birth of Jesus, the coming together of people and prophecies.

What the Bible describes is all real. God sends real messengers, angels from heaven, to real mortals like Mary, Zacharias, Joseph, and shepherds. God revealed His plot of salvation in prophecies and fulfilled them in real time. . And each prophecy falls into

place exactly as God's good will ordained it. It is breath taking to see them come together.

Yes, there is movement, urgency and prophesies fulfilled in the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus! The magi come from the east following the star of the Son of God – His star they call it. They fulfill the prophecy of Psalm 72:

“The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts. 11 Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him.”

Mary makes haste to visit Elizabeth, her cousin, after the surprise appearance of the Angel Gabriel with the good news that she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit with the Son of God. Again, the Bible doesn't say how she made this 100 mile trip from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea. Most likely she joined a travelling caravan as was common .

What news she had to share with Elizabeth! Yes, Mary is the virgin spoken of in Isaiah 7:14, through whom God would take on true flesh. God's plan for the salvation of the world could only be fulfilled by THE Hero who is a true Man, but sinless, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

In faith, Mary humbly accepts her role as the earthly mother of the Son of God. What a beautiful compelling character God chooses to aid and care for her Hero, Jesus. Mary learns from the Angel that Elizabeth is also pregnant in her old age with His forerunner. Again, John the Baptist is prophesied as the Elijah to come in Malachi 4.

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

The compelling character John the Baptist pointed people to the Hero Jesus. He wasn't even worthy to untie His sandal, but through repentance and baptism, the people received forgiveness of their sin in Jesus. Yes, many would come to John to be baptized!

And we too are made compelling characters in God's Christmas story for we have been brought into the Holy family of God by the same baptism. And the blood of our Hero Jesus has forgiven us all our sins.

And the Bible story is entirely focused on THE strong and relatable hero – Jesus. For He is real. And the astounding and amazing truth is that the eternal, omnipotent, Creator of all things, becomes THE servant to His creation by becoming His creation, a true Man, born of the virgin Mary. And He lays down His life to save the world.

Yes, the Son of God is very relatable, a little baby, born humbly among animals. The super hero Jesus must be protected by His earthly parents, flee from evil in the middle of the night. He doesn't use His power to save Himself, but willingly endures hardship, pain, shame, suffering from the evil that is in this world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:10-12)

Today, the 28th of December, marks another prophecy that was fulfilled on the Christian calendar. For today is th day that is call the day of the Holy Innocents. As the devil pursued Jesus through Herod, there were compelling characters in the Christmas story that became real Christian martyrs. Two year old boys and younger were slain in the sad hope of killing the baby Jesus as well.

Our text tells us of this prophecy from Jeremiah 31:15:

**“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.”**

Ramah is the burial tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem...her weeping voice symbolizing the grief of the mothers who lost their children. And yet, these little Jewish baby boys are called holy innocents because they believed in the name of the Messiah, Jesus, who gave them His innocents through their circumcision. They indeed became children of God united in faith with the baby Jesus, who was circumcised on the 8th day as He placed Himself under the Law. Jesus was given His name on this day, the name upon which all are saved... the name which means “He will save His people from their sins”.

Indeed, we have the story of the naming of John the Baptist on his circumcision day. (Luke 1:59-60) John received his name, the name known to the Son of God as one in the Holy Family of God. He also died as a martyr of the faith.

Yes, in God's Christmas story there is action by God to rescue His Son from the murderous hands of Herod. There is rescue of the Holy Innocents by faith in Jesus. There is also faithfulness by the compelling characters of the magi, Mary and Joseph, the Holy family, made Holy by their faith in their Son, the Son of God. They trust in God wherever God leads them...told in a dream that it was safe to return from Egypt because Herod was dead. And yet, his evil son Archeleus was now governing and they could not return to Bethlehem, but told to go to Nazareth.

Again, our text tells us that God had already planned this. **“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.”** Nazer, a branch from Jesse's stump as we hear in Isaiah 11:1. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46) a skeptical Nathanael later asks. Come and see replied Phillip.

And each of us has come and seen and heard God's Christmas story. And by faith in Jesus you and I have also become part of the story, compelling characters believing, worshipping and serving Jesus! As today's Psalm, Psalm 111, tells us and many other prophecies of the Bible, God also has shown His love to the Gentiles, to us... **“He has declared to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations.”** Jesus has become our Light and salvation as Simeon proclaimed.

We give thanks to God this day that He has rescued us through our baptism from the evil work of the accuser, Satan. He now seeks to also destroy us because we are part of God's family through faith in Jesus. Revelation 12 gives powerful imagery of the devil pictured as a dragon pursuing the offspring of those born into the Holy Christian church.

“17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

But we are rescued and protected by our Savior Jesus who gives us His very body and blood this day to forgive us our sins and stop the mouth of the accuser against us.

Yes, Jesus is our Hero, our Savior. We “root” for Him with our praises and serve Him with our lives. Amen

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)