

The Father's Love Fulfilled

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Bible Text: Matthew 2:13-15; Hosea 11:1

Preached on: Sunday, December 21, 2008

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Turn in your Bibles please to the second chapter of Matthew. I would like to read in Matthew's gospel beginning with verse one in chapter two down through verse 16.

Last week we took occasion to look at the beginning of the chapter. We are looking more particularly this morning at verses 13, 14 and 15. We gain a little bit of context now in Matthew two beginning with verse one.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him."

After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.”

So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.¹

Please pray with me.

Father, thank you for your grace and for your Word. Thank you for this text which is before us this morning. Thank you that in it we can understand that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, to fulfill your love for each of us. We thank you that this is the case. And we pray that we would have our hearts opened to understand your heart and your love in sending your Son. Bless us to this end we ask in the name of Jesus Christ who is the Lord. Amen.

My text is Matthew two verses 13, 14 and 15. Verse 15 ends with these words, “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”²

As a young man just out of college, I had a falling out with my father. And the falling out was significant enough that, as I was in the army, I went to the administrative people at the post where I was stationed and asked them to send me to Korea.

This was a rather unusual request because this actually broke into the middle of some other training in which I was involved. But I was quite earnest. And I did ask that I be sent to Korea. I wanted to be on the other side of the world from my family and particularly my Father.

In retrospect over the years as I thought about this, I am sure that this hurt my Father deeply and that he felt he was unable to fulfill his love for his son.

In the same way, you can think about God, our heavenly Father, and his desire to fulfill his love for the likes of you and me. And you have to reckon with the fact that the Father

¹ Matthew 2:1-16

² Matthew 2:15

in heaven fulfills his love to us in Jesus Christ. This is why he sent his Son. The Father sent his Son into the world to fulfill his love for you and me.

In our text this morning, especially in these words, “Out of Egypt I called my Son,”³ we don’t readily see—on the face of them—the love and the compassion of the Father. But as we look at the underlying truth, the underlying love of the Father, I would like you to see and to feel the love of the Father in sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to fulfill this love for you and for me.

And so this is the point I want you to get this morning: that the Father sends the Son into the world to fulfill his love for you and me.

In our text this morning we see Herod once again, Herod who is bent on destroying Jesus Christ because he sees Jesus Christ as a rival king. Verses one and two in Matthew chapter two, once again:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”⁴

And, of course, Herod, hearing these words was now after this rival king. And he sends the magi to Bethlehem. We read in verse eight, “And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.’”⁵ Herod didn’t want to worship Jesus. He wanted to destroy this child.

But the magi had a dream as we read in verse 12, “And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.”⁶

And when Herod heard this he was enraged. Verse 16 tells us, “Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.”⁷ Herod didn’t want to make a mistake. And so he bracketed the time of the star’s appearing. He said, “I am not only going to look into a little window when this child was possibly born, but I am going to slay all of the children less than two years of age.” And so he did.

But God, in his providence, was preserving his Messiah. We this read in our text this morning, verse 13 and following:

³ Ibid.

⁴ Matthew 2:1-2

⁵ Matthew 2:8

⁶ Matthew 2:12

⁷ Matthew 2:16

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.” So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: Out of Egypt I called my Son.”⁸

And so Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus go down to Egypt and they wait and they wait until the death of Herod. Then they come back up out of Egypt. And we have these telling words at the end of verse 15, “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”⁹ In these words you can hear, resonating in the background, the love of the Father for his only begotten Son whom he *does* love and whom he *is* preserving.

Now this battle against Christ into which Herod enters is really a manifestation of cosmic warfare. We get a glimpse of this in the book of Revelation. And I would like you to turn back in the book of Revelation, if you would, to the 12th chapter. Revelation 12 is pretty much the center of the book of Revelation as far as the literature is concerned. And here we have a heavenly vision. We have been looking on the earthly plane and now as we look in Revelation chapter 12 we get a more heavenly perspective on what is taking place upon the earth.

Revelation chapter 12: “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”¹⁰ Here is a vision. And, of course, in this vision, as I have mentioned before, we have a portrayal of reality, a picture of reality, not the reality itself. The visions are like dreams from which we awaken and they seem very real and close at hand. But they present reality in picture form. In this vision we see a woman clothed with the sun. This woman is likely the Church in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. She is clothed with the light of the sun, bathed in this light, glorious light, the “sun of righteousness” shines upon her.¹¹ And she has 12 stars on her head in a crown. The stars, earlier in the book of Revelation, were the pastors of seven churches. And these stars may be representations of the 12 apostles. The woman stood with her feet upon the moon. She is a glorious figure in the heavens high above.

“And she was with child,”¹² the text tells us in verse two. “And she cried out being in labor and in pain to give birth.”¹³ Here is a representation, then, of Israel on one side, the Church of the Old Testament, and the Church of the New Testament, on the other side. And, of course, out of Israel, out of the Jews comes salvation. Jesus Christ the Messiah comes from Israel.

⁸ Matthew 2:13-15

⁹ Matthew 2:15

¹⁰ Revelation 12:1

¹¹ See Malachi 4:2.

¹² Revelation 12:2

¹³ Ibid.

Verse three. “Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.”¹⁴ A fierce, red dragon, ready for warfare, full of anger and the dragon has seven heads. He is full of wisdom, as it were. And he has 10 horns. He is full of power. And I can’t help but think that since there are more horns than heads, his power outruns his wisdom. And so it is with the devil. And this *is* a representation of the evil one.

Verse four. “And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”¹⁵ Yes, the dragon prepared to swoop in when the baby was born and devour that child and destroy it. And so we have a picture, a heavenly picture of what is transpiring upon the earth. Herod, and instrument of the devil, is enraged. He takes his stand against God’s anointed, his Messiah, and attempts to destroy him.

Verse five tells us, “And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.”¹⁶ In verse five you have an echo of Psalm two. And you also see the picture of Jesus Christ going through life and ascending up into heaven and sitting on the throne of the majesty on high.

In all of this you have a picture and portrayal of cosmic struggle and cosmic battle. This battle and this struggle began in Eden. And you remember the story of how Adam and Eve were tempted by the devil and succumbed and ate the fruit, the forbidden fruit. But God in his love and compassion for his children in Eden came to them and said, “No, you are not going to serve the devil. You are going to serve the living God.” And he came to them, even before he did anything else, and he gave them this promise, “I will put enmity between you, devil, and the woman.”¹⁷ God made a division between the woman and the devil. He implicitly said to the woman, “No, you are not going to love the evil one. I am going to alter your heart so that you love me and your enmity will be towards the evil one.”

And so there was a division in humankind. And we graphically see the enmity of this division when Cain kills his brother Abel. And we see this division carried out in the stories of the book of Genesis. Then we find Abraham receiving the promise of God and also Isaac and Jacob. And then we see the children of Israel, finally, in Egypt toward the end of the book of Genesis. At this point I would like you to look at another text now, this one in Exodus. It is Exodus chapter four and verses 21, 22 and 23. God has a deep love in his heart for this people. And notice how he speaks of Israel, his people.

¹⁴ Revelation 12:3

¹⁵ Revelation 12:4

¹⁶ Revelation 12:5

¹⁷ See Genesis 3:15

He says to Moses in verse 21, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”¹⁸ Pharaoh is like Herod, adamantly opposed to the people of God.

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.’ So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.”¹⁹

God says to Pharaoh, through Moses, speaking about the children of Israel now in captivity, “Israel is my son, My firstborn.”²⁰

Think of your own children and consider how you think of your firstborn, male or female. Do you not love that child? Do you not have compassion on that child? And you would exclaim, in a heartfelt way, if that child is a male child, “This is my son, my firstborn.” No, you would not utter these words lightly. There would be compassion in your heart and love. The words would express an overflowing love in your heart with regard to your son. And this is exactly what you should understand about God as he looks at Israel, his son. “Israel is my son, My firstborn.”²¹

But now we have another Old Testament text to which we must turn. It is Hosea, chapter 11. Please turn with me there. Here again, we have a little window into the heart of God. As you turn there, remember the catastrophes which happened to Adam and Eve. Also remember all the catastrophes that happened to God’s people subsequent to Adam and Eve. Remember all the catastrophes which have befallen Israel. And recall that in all of this, God bore a special love in his heart for his people.

Look at Hosea chapter 11 and verse one. “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.”²² Yes, when God first formed those people out of the loins of Abraham, a descendant of Adam, he had a love in his heart for his people. “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.”²³ God redeemed his people and brought them out of Egypt.

But what happened? “The more they called them,”²⁴ that is, the more the prophets spoke to the children of Israel, “The more they went from them,”²⁵ the more they departed from the words of the prophets.

¹⁸ Exodus 4:21

¹⁹ Exodus 4:22-23

²⁰ Exodus 4:22

²¹ Exodus 4:22

²² Hosea 11:1

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hosea 11:2

²⁵ Ibid.

“They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols. Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk.”²⁶ And I think of one of those little triplets for whom you have prayed and my son-in-law in the living room of their home. “Come on, come on, Matteo, take a step. Take a step.” “It was Ephraim. It was Ephraim I taught to walk and I took them in my arms.”²⁷ And how often have you taken your own children in your arms. “But they did not know that I healed them.”²⁸ And God, the Father, continues. “I led them,” God says, “I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love, And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws; And I bent down and fed them.”²⁹

Verse five.

They will not return to the land of Egypt; But Assyria—he will be their king Because they refused to return to Me. The sword will whirl against their cities, And will demolish their gate bars And consume them because of their counsels. So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them [that is, the prophets] to the One on high, None at all exalts Him.³⁰

And then these telling verses in eight and following. And you can hear the pathos in the heart of God. “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?”³¹ How can I treat you like those cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that I destroyed? How can I do that?

My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath.³²

Here is the heart of God on display for you and me. Oh, how he longed for his love to be fulfilled in his people. And yet they spurned him. Any of you who have experienced this type of thing in your own family will more fully understand God’s heart.

Go back now to Matthew, chapter two. Here is Herod, bent on destroying the Christ and God is saying, “No, no, I love my Son. And so my Son is going to go down into Egypt.”

Verse 15 again, “He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my Son.’”³³

²⁶ Hosea 11:2-3

²⁷ See Hosea 11:3

²⁸ Hosea 11:3

²⁹ Hosea 11:4

³⁰ Hosea 11:5-7

³¹ Hosea 11:8

³² Hosea 11:8-9

³³ Matthew 2:15

Out of Egypt he had called his Son, Israel, once before. And he had great hopes for Israel. He wanted to take Israel into that Promised Land. He wanted Israel to love him and to serve him. He wanted the people to gather in the temple and to understand him and to lift their voices in praise to him. And it was, as it were, that all of his hopes and dreams for his people were dashed on a rock.

But now he says, now God says, “Here is my Son, my only Son, whom I love. And, yes, because Herod is after him, down to Egypt you must go Mary and Joseph and Jesus, my Son. And once again I am calling you. I am beckoning you. Out of Egypt I am calling my Son and now all of my love will be fulfilled in my Son, being called up out of Egypt.”

And how is it that God’s love is fulfilled in this Son whom he loves, God’s Son being brought up out of Egypt? Oh, Jesus was not a rebellious and disobedient Son. No, he was a Son who loved his Father in heaven. And he loved his earthly Father Joseph, his stepfather. And he loved his mother. He was obedient in every respect. He loved his Father and his Father’s love for him was being fulfilled.

And not only so, Jesus Christ, living a perfect life, went to that cross. And he bore the sins of his people on that cross. In his own body he bore our sins on the cross. And for what reason? That he might lead us to God. That he might, as it were, take us by the hand and lead us to his Father in heaven.

And so these words in Matthew chapter two and verse 15, these simple words, “Out of Egypt I called my Son,”³⁴ bear with them all the love of the Father in looking at how he will fulfill his love in his Son, Jesus Christ.

You see, this is why Jesus Christ came in to the world. This is what Christmas is about. Christmas is about God sending his Son into the world to fulfill his love for you and me through this Son whom he loves.

I can’t help but think of my own father, once again, in this regard. After 13 long months on the other side of the world, having communicated with my own father pitifully little during that 13 month period, I am quite sure that my father longed to have his love fulfilled in his eldest son. And I am sure he did love me.

And when I came home from Korea I called my mom on the phone and I said, “Mom, I am flying to Philadelphia and then I am going to take the bus. Would you pick me up?”

She knew exactly what I was saying because we had done this many times. And when I got to that bus stop and got out of the bus it was dark. There was just a street light or two in the parking lot where we were and a car or two. When I got out of the bus someone got out of one of the cars. It was my dad. And he stooped down a little bit to see who was getting out of the bus. And then he ran... he ran to me and he fell on my neck and he hugged me and wept and his love for me was fulfilled. That’s a microcosm, friends, of God’s love through Jesus Christ for the likes of you and me.

³⁴ Ibid.

“Out of Egypt I called my Son.”³⁵ And when he came, he fulfilled God’s love. This is what Jesus Christ did. And this is what Christmas is all about, God sending his Son to fulfill his love for you and me.

My dad waited 13 long months to fulfill his love for his son. God, through Jesus Christ, fulfills the Father’s love for you and me. Don’t keep him waiting. Don’t keep him waiting. Come to him now and embrace the Father in heaven now through Jesus Christ.

This is what Christmas is about. God sent his Son into the world to fulfill his love for you and me.

Let’s pray.

Lord, thank you. We are humbled much by your grace and love. Forgive us where we have so often spurned you and caused you to wait upon us. We pray, Lord, that you would be pleased to love us through your Son Jesus Christ. We see this is why you came, Lord Jesus. And through your Son whom you love, receive us now we pray, our Father, in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

³⁵ Ibid.