

St. Peter Lutheran Church
January 4, 2026
Second Sunday after Christmas
Matthew 2:13-23

Jacob, or Israel, as God had named him, went down to Egypt, away from the land of Canaan which was promised to him and his descendants. Israel, from whom a Seed would come in whom the nations of the world would be blessed, went down to Egypt, away from the land of promise. Israel, who was promised many offspring, and that kings would come from him, went to Egypt, where a king already ruled.

This was a trial for Israel. It appeared that he was marching away from, not toward, the fulfillment of God's promises. But **God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night and said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again.** God would remain with him and fulfill all that he had spoken—even if this trial was necessary.

And a trial is was—for after Joseph died, there was a Pharaoh to take power who didn't know Joseph and who oppressed the people of Israel, and laid on them heavy burdens and taskmasters. God's chosen people, promised a land for themselves and their descendants, were slaves in a foreign country. To them the Christ was promised, from them the Christ would come, and they toiled as slaves.

St. Peter writes, **If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.** And so it was in Egypt, that when Moses confessed the Lord before Pharaoh, Pharaoh said, **"Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go."** So on Moses' part, God was blasphemed, but in the people of Israel, the Lord was glorified. For the Lord brought them out with a mighty hand, with great signs and wonders, and he drowned the host of Pharaoh in the red sea—He was glorified before Egypt and all the world. As God said to Moses, **"Then the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."** And so it happened that God showed his glory in the destruction of Pharaoh's army and the release of His people from bondage—God was glorified in the trial of His people.

The baby Christ was no stranger to trial. If God's people experienced trial on account of the promised Messiah, the Messiah was to experience even more focused hostility. In the Revelation to St. John, we see a fiery red dragon **who stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour the Child as soon as it was born.** Satan and all his host desired the destruction of this Child. Herod, a participant of wrath against God's Anointed, has no regard for innocent human life, but destroys all the little boys of Bethlehem, 2 years old and under, in an attempt to devour the Child. But this male Child born of Mary was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. He

was not destined to be killed by Herod. So Joseph, warned in a dream that Herod will seek the life of the Child, take the Child and His mother, and flees to Egypt, fulfilling what was **spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.”** So little Jesus retraces the steps of God’s people, leaving Canaan and heading to Egypt, only to be called back out again. He who became flesh redeems our flesh and our lives. He experienced every stage of our own lives, redeeming it all. He retraced Israel’s history, redeeming it all. He became the Second Adam, redeeming all. He does all things well in our place. He was the faithful Son who came out of Egypt, who didn’t turn to idols, but had no other gods. He is the faithful Second Adam who is tempted in every way that we are, and yet is without sin. He is blasphemed in the world, hated, and the target of the red fiery dragon, the kings of the earth who put their trust in man, and all who set themselves against God.

And in all His trials, on the part of His enemies, God is blasphemed, but on His part God is glorified. So Jesus was protected from Herod in order to complete the trials appointed for Him. He was spared from Herod’s fury for a wrath to be revealed.

When Herod is dead, Joseph brings him out of Egypt back to Israel, but **when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. 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.”**

He grows up quietly in Nazareth. Sure, He experienced the trials common to us in a fallen world, but for the most part, but a fiery trial awaited him of enormous proportions—and when our Lord came to John at the Jordan and was baptized, and when the Spirit descended and remained on Him, His appointed suffering was set in motion. He immediately drew the full attention of the devil for 40 days. He attracted the scorn of the Pharisees and other leaders in Jerusalem. He became a public figure who took much heat.

And it all came to its necessary completion when His life came to an end, when He was condemned to death and crucified on a cross. But even at this trial that came upon Him, though it looked like He was helpless as the object of the fury of Satan and those who oppose God, His life was not taken from Him—He laid it down. This trial was appointed for Him by His Father—not Joseph—but His true Father in heaven, from whom He came. From whom He is eternally begotten, but for us men and for our salvation was born of his mother in in this age.

The trial was indeed a contention between Christ and His enemies, but the wrath Christ faced in this contention burned hotter from friend and not foe. It was God’s wrath that rained down on His beloved Son, as He bore our sins in His body on the tree. God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting our trespasses against us. Instead, He laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. And Christ bore the fiery trial, hell, and death.

Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been slain. What good news this is for us. The angel of death passes over us. Christ's blood covers us and keeps us safe. Christ's blood atones for our sins and clears us of guilt. We are freed from slavery to sin and death, and promised eternal life with God in heaven. So don't suffer for a life of sin, for this is of no benefit to you. Don't submit yourself again to slavery but live in the freedom of Christ.

Hold to Christ. Remember your baptism into Him. Hear His Word and promises regularly and faithfully. Receive Him at the altar to receive nourishment for the journey. When you are doing good and avoiding sin, you still will suffer, but in this you should not be ashamed but glorify God. For you ought not **think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.** Belonging to Christ means the cross belongs to you too. **But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.** For the One who laid down His life, also took it up again, for this commandment He received from His Father. He rules all nations with a rod of iron. And He comes again soon in wrath and great fury against His enemies, whom He will slay with the breath of His mouth.

But you, Christ's spoil from His fiery battle, will not be lost to Him. God loved you enough to give His only Son to redeem you. Christ came for you—to redeem you from sin and death—to reconcile you to God—to bring to you salvation. Amen.