

**Lessons for the First Sunday after Christmas**

**January 1, 2023**

Psalm 111 ~ *Praise for all God's righteous acts, especially His redemption of Israel.*

Isaiah 63:7-14 ~ *God rescued His people from Egypt, but they rebelled against Him.*

Galatians 4:4-7 ~ *In God's good time He sent His Son.*

Matthew 2:13-23 ~ *God rescued Jesus from Herod by taking Him to Egypt until it was safe.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** It Takes One to Save One.

There is a kind of closeness that is born from sharing similar experiences. God our Redeemer became one of us to rescue us from our plight of sin. Isaiah describes this powerful change: 'In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them.' St. Paul also: 'God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law.' The same repetition of his people's experience is summed up in the Gospel: 'Out of Egypt I called my Son.' God's Son became one of us that we might be made children of God.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord Jesus, I celebrate the mystery of your birth in the flesh and wonder at the miracle of my spiritual birth! As you took on my flesh and sin, let me receive your spirit and righteousness, not only by the word of God, but also in my daily deeds. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** Jesus paid a price greater than silver or gold to rescue us from bondage to our sins and made us fellow heirs of life. All the resources of our lives are dedicated to the new life He has provided for us in service to His love.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** Lord, in the fullness of Your time and the power of Your Son, You rescued us from sin and made us children of Your grace. From slavery to service, You have turned us, every one; Now use us as Your messengers in this and every place. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** Whether we are trapped under the curse of God's law or by fear of tyrants or in slavery to hard rulers, God comes to our rescue. Sometimes we seem to prefer the bondage, as the Israelites did when they rebelled and grieved the Holy Spirit. God sent His Son into Egypt to escape the danger of Herod's anger. He called Him out of Egypt to rescue us from the power of sin. We are redeemed by the One who was born under the burden of the law to rescue us from the slavery of our sin.

**Questions to Consider:** Does the phrase, "Been there, done that!" have a positive or negative meaning for you?

- What did it take to bring deliverance to God's rebellious people?
- How would you describe the work of the Holy Trinity expressed in Galatians 4:4-7?
- What cost was entailed to keep Jesus safe from Herod?
- What sacrifice did it take to "spring" Israel from Egypt?

**Bonus on next page:** A representation of the massacre of the innocents.

## **As Rachel Wept**

As Rachel wept in Ramah, Mary trudged  
along the road to Egypt. She could hear  
her sisters' cry in Bethlehem. Their dirge  
of sorrow filled the night with pain and fear.  
Her own dear child she cradled in her arms  
while other mothers held their lifeless sons  
close to their aching breasts - their mortal forms  
dispatched by Herod's sword! Those little ones  
poured out their blood so Mary's child could live!  
A different sword another time turned in  
her heart when her son's blood would flow to give  
His people life and rescue them from sin.

Still Rachel weeps today, but now for joy:  
the Savior of the world is Mary's boy!

*- Gilbert A. Franke, 12/09/08*