

ANGELIC MESSAGES FOR OUR TIME:  
GET UP AND GO  
Matthew 2:13-18

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A primary Sunday school class invited their pastor to view their Christmas art work. On the bulletin board were posted pictures of the Holy Family at the manger, angels singing to shepherds in the field, and wise men bringing their gifts to the Christ child. One drawing, however, puzzled the pastor. It was a picture of the Holy Family boarding a jet plane with the pilot already in the cockpit. "Tell me about this picture," said the pastor. The little boy who drew it spoke up and said, "That is Mary and Joseph and the baby making their flight to Egypt." "Oh," replied the pastor, "and who is that flying the plane?" "Why, that is Pontius the Pilot," said the kid assertively.

We catch up with the Holy Family today on the run, if not on an airplane then certainly aboard the best transportation they could find. It was night. And they had to get out of Bethlehem in a hurry. For an angel of the Lord had appeared to Joseph in a dream saying "Get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt." King Herod is on a rampage. Christ our Redeemer quickly becomes Christ the refugee. So it is that all men must learn before they die, what they are running from, and to, and why! I'd like us to think about that on our way to Holy Communion. Running!

**RUNNING FROM EVIL!**

Did you hear the story about a woman who bought an extremely expensive dress? When she showed it to her husband that night, he immediately exclaimed, "Why did you do that?" "The devil made me do it," explained the wife. "Why didn't you say, 'Get thee behind me Satan?'" insisted the husband. "I did," contended the wife. "When Satan said it looked good from the back too, I gave in and bought it."

If the devil were a joke, we could laugh our way into a new year. But evil is not a laughing matter.

King Herod had the Sanhedrin executed then proceeded to murder his wife, his mother-in-law, and three of his own sons. Like the white witch in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Herod is threatened by the presence of a child. So he orders the "slaughter of the innocents," the murder of every male child in the vicinity of Bethlehem age two and younger.

The Christmas story is not just about love, joy and peace. It's about hate and greed, and mothers, like Rachel, weeping for their children. Sometimes our best defense against evil is escape. Run from evil like New Yorkers ran from the Twin Towers. Get away from disaster like residents of the Gulf coast ran from hurricane Katrina. Remember the old Hee Haw line where a patient complains to Doc Campbell that he broke his arm in two places? Doc replies, "Then you ought to stay out of them places."

## **RUNNING INTO DETOURS**

Verse 14: *“So they left for Egypt and stayed there until the death of Herod!”*

Have you been to Egypt? I was there for three days once; it was two days too long. I paid to get on a camel then had to pay even more to get off. The dirt and poverty were painful to see. I like those words of the prophet “Out of Egypt, I called my Son.”

For Mary and Joseph, Egypt was a land of slavery, a place to make bricks with no straw, to endure whippings for no reason. It was a long way to Nazareth by way of Egypt.

Wayne Oates writes “Life’s fixed organizations, dreams, hopes, and fantasies have a way of slamming into walls and being smashed. A new way through, over, around, or out has to be found.” Then he offered these laws for handling detours:

Law of Realism—Life gives us facts. Denial may get us through the shock, but fantasies will not suffice forever. A traveler in a hurry drove right past the sign that said, “BRIDGE OUT, 3 MILES AHEAD!” Three miles down the road there was a huge barrier blocking the road with a sign which read, “THE BRIDGE IS OUT, ISN’T IT?”

Law of Compensation—When one part of the body is removed, kidney, lung, eye, a companion part tends to strengthen and take over that function. My daughter-in-law’s father is blind. But he can hear everything. When his daughters were whispering about him over Christmas, he interrupted them and said, “You know I can hear every word you say.”

Law of Perspective—No trouble enjoys everlasting life. This too shall pass. You can live by those principles.

Law of Resurrection—The old life must die for a new life to be born. A grain of wheat dies and then sprouts. We have to let go of the past in order to embrace the future.

Law of Fellowship—We need not face our detours alone. God is with us. The communion of the saints surrounds us.

God knows the way through Egypt; all we have to do is follow.

## **RUNNING ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD**

Notice the recurring phrase ‘so was fulfilled what was said by the prophets.’ He will come out of Egypt and be called a Nazarene. Never mind that scholars can’t quite find the reference. The author saw it all within God’s plan.

Jeremiah 29:12 says, *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

About 100 years ago, a lawyer by the name of Max Ehrmann wrote a creed for life entitled Desiderata. In part it goes like this:

“Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexations to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time . . .

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars, you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.”

Have you that kind of faith as you face a new year? In all our running, we need the assurance that we are running with Jesus. He is present in every trouble. He is a guide through every detour. He will carry you through.

Lead me, Lord,  
I will follow;  
Lead me, Lord,  
I will go.  
You have called me-  
I will answer;  
Lead me, Lord, I will go.











