**Unique Childhood, Part Two**  January 8, 2017

Coffee/question – how do you understand God to be sovereign?

There are four things I want us to consider from the Matthew and Luke passages.

1. Jesus’ family had to run for their lives.

2. Jesus, for a time, was a refugee.

3. As a child, Jesus fulfilled what the Lord had said in advance about him.

4. In the crisis of running for their lives, God was in control.

**1. Jesus’ family had to run for their lives.**

Matthew 2:7-12: *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact*

*time the star had appeared.* ***8****He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.* ***10****When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.* ***11****On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.* ***12****And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

Herod, though shocked, played the part well, convincing the Magi that he too, wanted to worship the new king.

The Magi left Jerusalem, convinced, they’d found in Herod a kindred spirit.

However, God the Father perceived Herod’s thoughts and knew what was in his heart.

If God hadn’t spoken to the Magi in a dream, they would have returned to Jerusalem,

and told Herod exactly where Jesus was.

God intervened so that this didn’t happen.

***13****When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.*

*“Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until*

*I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” 14 So he got up, took the*

*child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt…*

God the Father could have sent an angel to stand guard at the house in Bethlehem, with orders to strike down Herod’s soldiers, if they tried to harm the infant Jesus.

But he didn’t.

Why didn’t God fight him?

Why did God choose to have Joseph, Mary and Jesus flee to Egypt?

Consider this.

When human societies deal with enemies they tend to do so in militarily ways.

The armies of heaven could have decisively dealt with Herod; and Caesar; and others like

them and those who would have taken their place.

But it was not God’s plan to use sheer force to crush evil.

No one but the Triune God knew that the suffering of the Messiah as he gave his life in sacrifice was how evil would be overcome and undone.

Just as there was a right moment for the Messiah to be born among us; so, there was a

right moment when he would give his life – and that moment hadn’t yet arrived, when

Herod threatened the infant Jesus.

That’s one of the reasons why God directed Joseph to flee to Egypt.

**2. Jesus, for a time, lived as a refugee.**

As we read the text in Matthew, it seems as if it was the very next night, in the middle of the night, in a dream, that God, through an angel, told Joseph to “get up;” and to “escape to Egypt.”

There was little time to prepare.

They had to leave in the middle of the night, because no one could know they were gone,

nor where they’d gone.

As a toddler, Jesus experienced what it was like to be a refugee.

Have you ever considered this part… of the story of his life… in this way?

On June 20, 2016, the UN released this report.

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| **‘Unprecedented’ 65 million people displaced by war and persecution in 2015 – UN** |



In Yemen, internally displaced children stand outside their family tent after the family fled their home in Saada province and

found refuge in Darwin camp, in the northern province of Amran. Photo: UNHCR/Yahya Arhab

The number of people displaced from their homes due to conflict and persecution last

year exceeded 60 million for the first time in the United Nations’ history, a number greater than the combined populations of the United Kingdom, or of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, says a new report released on World Refugee Day.

The [Global Trends 2015](http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7) compiled by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) notes that 65.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2015, an increase of

more than 5 million from 59.5 million a year earlier. The tally comprises 21.3 million refugees, 3.2 million asylum seekers, and 40.8 million people internally displaced within their own countries.

Measured against the world’s population of 7.4 billion people, one in every 113 people

globally is now either a refugee, an asylum-seeker or internally displaced – putting them

at a level of risk for which UNHCR knows no precedent.

Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia produce half the world’s refugees, at 4.9 million, 2.7 million

and 1.1 million, respectively. Colombia had the largest numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs), at 6.9 million, followed by Syria’s 6.6 million and Iraq’s 4.4 million.

In all, 86 per cent of the refugees under UNHCR’s mandate in 2015 were in low- and middle-income countries close to situations of conflict. Distressingly, children made up an astonishing 51 per cent of the world’s refugees in 2015, with many separated from their parents or travelling alone, UNHCR said.

**http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/‘unprecedented’-65-million-people-displaced-war-and-persecution-2015-–-un**

In Hebrews 2:14, 17 it says that *“Jesus shared in our humanity,”* and that *“he had to be*

*made like us in every way.”*

As I read this article alongside of the Hebrews 2 passage and Matthew’s account of how

Jesus’ parents had to flee with him for their lives, I asked myself this question –

does Jesus understand; does he care about these 65 million people (half of them children)

who are displaced; who are refugees in the world today?

The answer to that question - is absolutely yes.

James 5:11 says that Jesus is *“full of compassion and mercy.”*

Jesus both understands and cares, because he too for a time, was a refugee.

How did these qualities of heart and character find expression in Jesus?

When he returned after his baptism by John and his temptation by Satan, he announced

in Nazareth what would be the focus of his ministry:

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,*

*because he has anointed me*

*to preach good news… to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim… freedom for the prisoners*

*and recovery of sight… for the blind,*

*to release… the oppressed,*

*to proclaim… the year of the Lord’s favor.* Luke 4:18-19.

Has Jesus’ manifesto changed?

Matthew 28:18-10 – go into all the world and preach the good news

James 1:27 says: ***“****Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this:*

*to look after orphans and widows in their distress…”*

While it is not the focus of our teaching this morning, it is one of the ways this passage

applies to Jesus’ church today.

Jesus cares for the weak, the poor, the disadvantaged, the oppressed in our world.

And he expresses his care, through his church.

You will always find followers of Jesus, present and involved in the troubled areas of our

world – those who’ve been sent there to be the hands, feet, voice and presence of Jesus.

This challenges us to ask: what part is Sooke Baptist to play?

Does Jesus want one of us go? A family? A retired couple?

Or is he impressing upon us, to prayerfully and financially support through our mission

budget, someone who is planning to go or is already on site in one of the world’s troubled areas, being the presence of Jesus?

Knowing how important compassion ministry is to Jesus, is why…we have created a position

on the church board for someone who would give leadership to and oversee the compassion ministries of this local church.

We are looking for someone who shares Jesus’ concern for those in need; and who gets it;

who understands, that Jesus’ church is to live… and proclaim... the good news.

Does someone come to mind?

Are you sensing a tug on your heart that this might be where God wants to use you?

Please speak to me if that is the case.

Our calling as a church is to be center of radical compassion and proclamation focused on meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people.

It is neither one or the other – it is both.

That was how Jesus did it, which is why, this is how we will do it.

**3. As a child, Jesus fulfilled what the Lord had said in advance about him.**

Matthew wrote that going to Egypt was a fulfillment of what the Lord had said through

Hosea.

Look at the passage in Hosea 11:1-4: *“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt*

*I called my son.* ***2****But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.*

***3****It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them.* ***4****I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.*

The Hosea passage is speaking about the Exodus.

The Lord is remembering when the nation of Israel was a child, a toddler – when he rescued them from the power of Egypt.

At first read, I did not see the Messianic connection.

It made me wonder, if Matthew was doing what some prophecy people do today; those who grab a verse from the Old Testament and then announce this is speaking of such and such that is happening right now, and the rest of us think....“really???? I don’t see that!”

Matthew goes to great lengths in his gospel to show the prophecies which Jesus fulfilled.

We don’t have time to look at each one. But this could be a great exercise for the life groups

to do this week.

Matthew 1:23 – Isaiah 7:14

Matthew 2:5-6 – Micah 5:1-2

Matthew 2:17-18 – Jeremiah 31:15

Matthew 3:3 – Isaiah 40:3

Matthew 4:14-16 – Isaiah 9:1-2

Matthew 8:17 – Isaiah 53:4

Matthew 10:35-36 – Micah 7:6

Matthew 11:10 – Malachi 3:1

Matthew 12:17-21 – Isaiah 42:1-4

Matthew 13:14-15 – Isaiah 6:9-10

Matthew 13:35 – Psalm 78:2

Matthew 15:8-9 – Isaiah 29:13

Matthew 21:5 – Zechariah 9:9

Matthew 26:31 – Zechariah 13:7

Matthew 27:9-10 – Zechariah 11:12-13; Jeremiah 19:1-13; 32:6-9

How are we to make sense of Matthew’s citing of Hosea?

Look again at that phrase in 2:15: *“And so was fulfilled...”*

The Greek word is ‘plereoo.’

It means to fill up; to complete. Vines Dictionary

Some of the OT prophecies about the Messiah are clear, and others are harder to discern. Jesus brought all of them into the light; even those in the shadows.

And as he did, we come to understand, that it is he who completes, the story of the Old Testament.

So, what was Jesus completing by going to Egypt?

Kevin Deyoung explains:

*“Referencing the Hosea passage...is not an example of arbitrary exegesis on the part of*

*a New Testament writer....*

*Jesus, as Matthew correctly understood the situation, was filling up the redemptive historical purposes of the nation of Israel...*

*This is why Matthew so carefully drew analogies between the events of the nation’s history*

*and the historical incidents in the life of Jesus...*

*Matthew portrays Jesus as the true and faithful Israel; the new Israel.”* www.christianpost.com

Hosea 11:1 is not a direct prophecy about Jesus and his family going to Egypt.

But Matthew did see something Messianic in Hosea’s words.

When the child Jesus had to flee from Herod and went to Egypt, doing so brought to a climax the work of deliverance that God had begun with the nation of Israel long ago and was now being brought to completion in the Exodus of Jesus.

The first Israel had broken faith with God.

Jesus would be the faithful Son.

And what he did on behalf of the nation of Israel, he also did for us.

**4. In the crisis of running for their lives, God was in control.**

*“Get up,” [the angel] said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until*

*I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.” 14 So [Joseph] got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*

It was the paranoia and murderous rage of Herod that caused Joseph, Mary and Jesus

to have to flee.

But Herod’s evil intent to kill Jesus, didn’t catch God off guard.

God knew beforehand that all of this would happen and he purposed to use it to fulfil his

will for Jesus.

This truth of God’s sovereignty is challenging to grasp, no matter how long you’ve

followed Jesus.

But grasp it we must.

Because it really does makes all the difference in how we relate to God and how we

live our day to day lives.

Is God a puny deity, who has to negotiate with other powers; who has limits on what he

can and can’t do? Does he have to explain himself to us?

Does he have to ask our permission; get our approval before he does anything?

Our understanding of God’s sovereignty must be shaped by what he has revealed to us

in his word.

Job 9:12: ‘*Who can say to him, ‘What are you doing?’*

Daniel 4:35: *He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.*

*No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”*

God is in charge of this world, and the entire universe.

He is not answerable to anyone.

No one can hinder or stop him.

His will, will be done.

He not only created all that is; he sustains everything.

If he took his hand off of this world; off of our lives; everything would collapse and end.

This is how involved he is with our lives.

The circumstances that happen to us are not random.

The universe is not governed by chance.

Everything that touches us, passes through his hands – the good, the bad and the ugly.

We may not understand right now, how this can be; but all of the circumstances of our lives, will ultimately glorify our great God; nothing will be wasted.

It’s here we are faced with a choice.

We can choose to diminish God and accuse him of foul play; or

doubt his faithfulness; or

be cautious and tentative in our trust of him, or

dwell on our disappointments and tragedies, so that, even though time moves on,

our focus remains on the past; on what we’d lost.

Or... we can decide to press into our Savior;

to hold tightly onto him;

to rest in the truth that his thoughts and ways are far above ours;

and in doing so, live with

(1) a hopeful expectancy that ultimately he will restore and make all things new; and

(2) a solid confidence that he is good and will work all things for his good.

Joseph had to flee with his family in the middle of the night from a very real danger.

They had to leave home and live as refugees for an extended time.

But as they did so, God remained in control.

Our closing song is a declaration of what we believe to be true of God.

That in the sorrow he meets us.

As we wait on him, he works, teaching us to trust.

In the challenges, he is with us.

His wisdom is unimagined.

Though he reigns on high, he reaches down to us in endless grace.

We believe he can turn for good the things that are meant for evil.

Sing this song with faith.

Declare your confidence in God’s goodness.

I’ve also left on the table here at the front an article entitled, “Trauma is Not a Life Sentence.”

There is good insight and Scriptural reference and counsel that may help you if you are struggling to rest in God’s sovereignty in light of challenging circumstances that have happened to you or are happening.

**The Blessing**

Genesis 50:20