

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Jan 1, 2017 (The Lord's Supper)

Notes for the sermon Jesus, the Refugee



Ps 148 and Matt 2:13-23 Sermon Text = Matt 2:14

***Then Joseph got up, and took the child and mother by night,
and went to Egypt.***

[Hymns = 534, 530, 556 in the *Book of Praise*]

Key Ideas

1. God identifying with human displacement and suffering – “took flesh and dwelt among us” – experiencing the fear and degradation of flight in the face of violence – to a strange and foreign land – an experience that many of us, or our parents, or our grandparents, have had – not always the escape from violence that Joseph orchestrated, but at, very least, a search for a better life – never an easy transition – often encountered subtle forms of resistance and resentment – sometimes, not so subtle – but throughout it all, accompanied by a God who provokes change, transition, transformation – who invites us to join in the journey to the Commonwealth of God – to the true and everlasting home that God is preparing with us and for us
2. Went to and returned from Egypt – a significant place for the Jewish community of Matthew’s day - the land that had been ruled by an oppressive and exploitative regime from which God freed his people to restore them to their true identity as companions with God in blessing the whole creation – but Israel failed to fulfill this vocation over and over again – and God, determined to see his original intention realized, remained true to the original covenant and liberated his people yet again – as Leonard Cohen sang in his intriguing song ‘The Faith,’ “O love, aren’t you tired yet?” – the answer is a resounding ‘NO!’ – “not until my mission is complete and the whole creation flourishes in relationship with me” – God’s promise, God’s project, and our possibilities renewed in Jesus Christ
3. Metaphorical refugees – invited to come out of our comfort zones and join in the journey to the Commonwealth of God – what situations are keeping you captive? – what dimensions of your life feel like a comfortable slavery, a capitulation to the comforts of the familiar or the self-indulgent? – is God conversing with your soul to encourage you to get up, take your beloved ones, and go to a new place, a stranger place, probably, but perhaps a safer place in the long run for your true flourishing? – and in that place, a new depth of relationship with God in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit will develop

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

We are invited, pestered, cajoled constantly by a God who never tires of pursuing us with the gift of a loving relationship – transcends anything we can experience with our neighbours – transforms the way we see ourselves – provokes us to grow as beloved companions of the Creator of the universe, who lived every dimension of human life with us and who never tires of reforming us to realize more fully the flourishing for which we were made – a flourishing that draws us into the mission of blessing God’s creation with all the gifts God has bestowed upon us