

The title for today's message is: **The Great Escape**

Matthew said: ***behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt,***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Christmas is over, 2019 is quickly drawing to a close and we now plan for the start of a brand new year

The Christmas rush of preparation has culminated in a few hours of quality time spent with family and friends, yet that has now come to an end also.

The gifts have been opened, the food has been eaten. And the hectic pace of the season now leaves us with a sense of emptiness, a sense of sadness.

All because the tinsel and the glitter, the lights and the decorations, the smells and the sounds of Christmas are now gone.

Everything is being replaced with, the mundane same-ness of life, as many people struggle with the post-holiday-blahs.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph had any of these feelings, the excitement of the Son of God being born that night, and the visit of the shepherds.

Then some time after that, there was the visit of the three Magi from the east, all baring gifts for baby Jesus.

But, those things are now gone too, there in the past, distant memories for Mary and Joseph and the birth of baby Jesus.

Now, the new family has set about the task of starting and raising a family they set about the task of raising a family, now that the joy of the moment is gone.

Did they too struggle with the post-holiday blahs? No! you see God didn't let them. He didn't allow the holy family to live a peaceful and quiet life in Bethlehem.

Things couldn't be peaceful and quiet, because the baby they were raising, is the Son of God, and Satan was already seeking ways to kill Him.

There just wasn't time for Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, to get comfortable and settled in Bethlehem.

Yet eventually after things cooled down, they would be able to move back to their small hometown up north.

Hover in the mean time, Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, would have to be placed into God's witness protection program, at least for a while.

Now, as we sit here, at the end of the year, and with the new year now upon us we ask ourselves, now what?

Well this morning, God answers that question, in and through His Word. He says there is much ahead of us, as well as much to look forward to.

It was in the middle of the night, while Joseph was sleeping, an angel of God once again appeared to him in a dream, and said:

“Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

Now the Magi from the east were on there way to visit the baby Jesus and after a visit with Herod they told him about their plans, which enraged him.

So Herod had requested the Magi to return to him after they found the child, but they didn't, which enraged him even more.

You see, as far as Herod was concerned, any threat to his position of power, must be quickly eliminated.

So, Herod sent his soldiers into Bethlehem, and the surrounding areas, ordering his soldiers to kill all boys under the age of two.

Of course Satan was behind this whole thing, in fact, this was Satan's first attempt to assassinate the Messiah.

But Joseph got up in the middle of the night, and took Mary and baby Jesus to Egypt to hide out, where they stayed until the death of Herod.

Do you see the two things that happened here? First, Satan loses, and the Messiah is safe, prophecy fulfilled.

So again, now what? King Herod dies, and again, an angel of God appears in a dream, and tells Joseph to take Mary and Jesus back to the land of Israel.

Joseph takes Mary and Jesus to Israel, but something is wrong. King Herod's son was in charge now, and he was just as bad as his father.

Again Joseph was warned in a dream to leave, so he moves his family north to the town of Nazareth. And finally it was there the family would stay.

Matthew says in verse 23: ***And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: "He shall be called a Nazarene."***

My friends, even today Satan is still hard at work, and he works extra hard especially during Christmas.

He wants you to not only, put your decorations away, but also to put your joy and faith away. Satan is saying; “You can stop being religious now,”

“You can stop being joyful now. Christmas is over.” That it’s time to get back to the regular way of life.”

Yes, Satan attacks us with these thoughts, and unfortunately, we sometimes listen, and the birth of Jesus fades into the past.

Its as if our desire to worship, goes down with the lights, and our joy disappears along with the wrapping paper.

Maybe our joy and desire disappear because we’ve bought into the world’s way of thinking more than we realize.

We find high rates of suicide, depression, child abuse, and other personal, and social problems especially during Christmas.

We find people, and sometimes ourselves, struggling to stay joyful, because deep down inside, we have been let down by the lies of the world.

The world says, happiness is found having all we want and being able to get more. But my friends, it doesn’t have to be that way.

The Word of God teaches us two things. Satan loses, and prophecies are fulfilled, and yes even after Christmas.

All throughout Jesus’ life, Satan lost, and the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled.

Now, think about what happened about 30 years after these events in our text took place.

Instead of Jesus fleeing from harm, Jesus would walk right into harm’s way. Instead of fleeing from Herod and the Roman government.

Jesus would allow Himself to be executed by the Roman government. And instead of God the Father protecting Jesus, He would allow harm to come to Him.

But even there, Satan loses, and prophecies are fulfilled. The prophecies that foretold that Jesus would someday suffer and die to take away the sins of the world.

All of our sins, even those moments when we buy into the lies of Satan, all of our sins have been washed away by Jesus on the cross.

That's why Jesus was born. And that's what brings us joy, and keeps our joy alive, yes, even after Christmas.

So you can see that these two small victories, in our text for today, are just a taste of the big victory, that Jesus will win for us at the cross, and at the empty tomb.

So now what? How do we respond to the grace of God? How do we say thank you? How do we glorify the God who has done all this for us?

We can live our life like Joseph lived. And how did Joseph live? He listened, and he obeyed. The angel told him to go to Egypt, he went to Egypt.

Then he was told to go to Israel, he went to Israel. And finally, he was told to watch out for Herod's son, so he moved to Nazareth.

Joseph listened, and obeyed. He wasn't a self-made man, Mr. Independence, I'll-do-my-own-thing-kind-of-guy. No! He listened to God, and he obeyed.

That's how he responded to the grace of God. That's how he glorified the God who had sent a Savior into his own family.

You and I can do the same today, because God reveals Himself to us, not in dreams, but through His written Word, so we too can listen, and obey.

We can be modern-day Joseph's, people who do not rely on themselves, but listen closely to the Word of God, and obey.

Throughout our lives, Satan will continue to lose, and God will continue to keep all the promises he has made to us, that pattern will never change.

May God bless you with a joy, and love, for Him, that lasts long after the Christmas season is over.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.