

## *'Twas the Day After Christmas'*

*Isaiah 63:7-9; Matthew 2:13-15; 19-21*

December 29, 2019

Here we are! The last Sunday of 2019, 4 days after Christmas Day and 2 days before, a new year and a new decade. Feels like we are caught in the middle, hung over from all the events and busyness of Christmas, thinking we finally get a break and can relax before returning back to our routine or planning the routines we have resolved to take up in the new year.

While it may feel like we are in a time in between new beginnings we are actually in Christmastide, The Christmas Season. Christmastide begins on Christmas Eve at sunset, which is the ending of Advent. Christmastide lasts twelve days and ends on the 5th of January. It is followed by the Epiphany season. The 12 days of Christmas are often lost to our modern society. One reason is a practical matter, as work progressed from farming/ hunting to industrialized work, to our non-stop information age the natural downtime from work in the winter months does not occur. Devoting 12 days for prayer, reflection and rededication during the Christmas season was very doable. Additionally, Epiphany traditionally considered the day the Magi brought their gifts to the Christ child was the day of giving gifts in the early church, which obviously lost out to jolly old St. Nicolas.

If you think about it, it is kind of odd that we prepare for 4 weeks during Advent, feel childlike anticipation and reverence on Christmas Eve, Christmas day baby Jesus is born and the next day we are ready to pack it in and call it a year.

This morning, I would like us to pause and take a look at what happened after Jesus was born and offer a few thoughts on what how we can BE in this season more intentionally and fully. We do have 8 days of the Christmas Season left.

Angels announced his birth to the shepherds who came to visit baby. It's important to note that the first visitors weren't of any status or wealth. These were relatively unimportant people, yet they were the first to see Messiah, the savior for all people. God was already preparing the world that his son was to be Lord of all. The magi also made their way to Bethlehem by way of King Herod. Bearing gifts. Returning to Matthew....

*Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, 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." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. " When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."*

What stands out to me here is Joseph's Faith. Things could have been very different had Joseph not acted as instructed by angels.

## He demonstrated 3 important things about Faith.

1. **Faith Acts Promptly** - When Joseph was warned by the angel to seek safety in Egypt, he didn't decide to "sleep on it" or consult the experts or otherwise delay. Matthew tells us he gathered the family "during the night" and set out for the safety of Egypt (v. 14). Faith doesn't delay unnecessarily.
2. **Faith Acts Obediently** - In response to God's command, delivered through the angelic messenger, Joseph obeyed the directions precisely. It would have been tempting to choose another, more convenient location—perhaps somewhere Joseph or Mary had family, certainly not in an entirely different country with its own language and customs. But there is no record of Joseph's raising the first objection; if God told him to go to Egypt, that's where he went.  
How often we may be missing God's best for us by trying to second-guess his will and purpose for our lives. Faithful obedience to God allows him to work effectively in our lives, protecting us from dangers of which we may be unaware, and leading us into new and exciting opportunities we've never dreamed of.
3. **Faith Acts with Trust** - If it took faith to gather his family and escape into Egypt, I suspect it took even more faith to return to the land that held such danger. When the angel sounded an "all clear" and instructed Joseph to return to Israel, there must have been some real questions about the wisdom of such an action. But without hesitation, Joseph trusted God to protect them and provide for them, and the family set out to return to their homeland. Have you ever sensed God's leadership into a particular course of action, but you just can't see how it will work? Does it seem too outlandish, too dangerous, too much of a risk? Some of the most exciting things that will ever happen in your life may be the result of God's asking you to walk where you can't yet see—but he can.  
When we set out in faith—faith characterized by promptness, obedience, and trust—there are no limits to what God can do in and through us. As we begin a new year, with new opportunities and new challenges before us, that's an important truth for us to understand.

The catch to acting in Faith is understanding what God would have us do. Our thinking must shift from fear to love, from the mundane detail to the big picture... Trust in the lord God with all your heart. Our heart is the home for love. He doesn't say trust with all your head. Thy will be done, not mine. We Pray and pray and pray... God will deliver he will see you through he will provide the understanding you need if we seek him above all.

Dear Lord, what are you calling us to do? Make your will known to us and give us FAITH to act. To move with promptness, obedience and trust!

Amen