

this account we see how Joseph is not the “real father” of Jesus. The angel says, “Take the child and his mother...” He doesn’t say, “Take your son” but instead, “take the child.” Note also that “the child” is listed before “his mother,” which shows us who is most important. In verses 14-15 we read: “So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 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.’”

Every year we read of people who steal figurines from nativity sets. A story ran out of Florida with the headline “GPS Jesus.” Because the baby Jesus statue had been stolen even after having been bolted down, they decided to equip the new one with a GPS system. The woman who oversees the display made these comments: “I don’t anticipate this will ever happen again, but we may need to rely on technology to save our savior.” Jesus doesn’t need the help of technology but as we look at our passage today we will see that He did need to be saved from Herod’s anger.

2. Massacre in Bethlehem (16-18)

Herod is now hot because the wise men had outwitted him. Follow along as I read verses 16-18: “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’”

Realizing that he has been tricked by the wise guys, Herod wigs out. Remember that he is a bloodthirsty killer by nature. All the worst instincts of a lifetime of cruelty now come to the surface. After realizing what happened, he was furious and did something worthy of Hitler or Stalin or Saddam Hussein. He ordered the cold-blooded murder of all males less than two years of age. Herod the Great had become the Butcher of Bethlehem. He was perhaps the ultimate oxymoron in history. Rich in what most of us consider valuable, he was totally bankrupt as a human being. He was addicted to power, obsessed with possessions, focused on prestige, and filled with paranoia.

3. Return to Nazareth (19-23)

Sometime later, perhaps a year or so, Herod dies and then an angel appears in another dream to Joseph and says: “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” This echoes Exodus 4:19 where God said to Moses: “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.” We read that after Joseph heard this, “...he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.”

After making it back to the Bethlehem area, Joseph finds out that Herod’s son Archæeles is now on the throne and he becomes afraid. This son was even more sinister than Herod. I wonder if Joseph was bothered and bummed out. He and his young family have been gone from Nazareth for a long time. They were refugees and immigrants and he probably longed to just settle down somewhere. Once again, he has a dream and then “withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’”

Jesus was often called “The Nazarene” as a title of derision. Nathaniel summed up what people thought of this town in John 1: 46: “Nazareth! Can anything good come

from there?" No one lived in Nazareth except those who could not afford to live anywhere else. Even in His death, the sign on the top of the cross was used to mock Him. The letters I.N.R.I. were the Latin abbreviation for: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

B) Beating the Blahs .

1. Exhibit instant obedience .

While we have no record of Joseph ever saying anything, his actions sure spoke loudly. In every case, when Joseph is told what to do, he instantly obeys. We can go back to the time when the angel of the Lord told him to take Mary as his wife in Matthew 1:24: "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." In scene one, once he hears the angel tell him to go to Egypt he didn't wait until morning but got up while it was still dark and departed. In scene two, when he's told to go back to Israel, he does so immediately. Then, when he's warned in a dream to not stay in Judea in scene three, he leads Mary and her son back on the road where they head north to Nazareth.

Let's take a look at the meaning behind some of the words in Matthew 2:13. The phrase "get up" means "to be roused from inactivity." Just like us, Joseph had to be prodded from inaction to action. The phrase "and take" means "to take your responsibility seriously." The word "escape" means "to move with haste because of danger."

Did you notice that Joseph does not ask for more information nor request more time? Once the Lord says it; that settles it. He doesn't ask questions or make a deal or tell the Lord that he'll obey later on. He doesn't complain about how hard it is to uproot his young family or wonder about travel accommodations. He just gets up and goes. Hebrews 11:8 tells us that Abraham "obeyed and went to a strange land." 1 Samuel 15:22: "To obey is better than sacrifice..." According to Jesus in John 13:17, blessings flow out of obedience: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." If we say that we love the Lord than we better show it by living for Him as Jesus said in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

In what area is the Lord expecting your instant obedience right now? Is there something He's prompting you to do but you've been delaying? Psalm 119:60 says: "I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." If you want to obey, don't delay. Is there a decision you've been putting off? An ungodly relationship you need to sever? An application you need to send in? Is there a gift you need to give? A commitment you need to make? Is there a person you need to forgive? What about deciding to plug into your church like you've never done before?

2. Expect constant opposition .

Have you noticed that every time hope is born, hard times are sure to follow? By understanding that Jesus and his family spent their first years as refugees, if we call ourselves followers of Christ, we too will experience opposition and persecution. We want a sentimental and sanitized Christmas but that's really not an option. Properly understood, Christmas should take us out of our comfort zone. Hebrews 11:13 says that we are "aliens and strangers on earth." This post-Christmas world is neither our hope nor our home. Just as Joseph endured opposition for the sake of the baby, as those who bear his name, we should expect no less. God didn't remove the difficulties but He did lead him through them.

Joseph learned that to be caretaker of the Christ-child meant that his simple and quiet life was over because good news always has enemies.

Likewise, as Christ-followers, our life should never be blah or boring. I don't know who said this but it's so true: "In order to see the Babe in Bethlehem, one must pass through Jerusalem and awaken King Herod." And, there are Herods everywhere because Herod is simply the seed of the serpent.

I'm not sure I fully grasp Revelation 12:17 but I catch enough to know that Satan is intent on wiping out believers: "Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Since Satan couldn't murder Immanuel as an infant he is out to assassinate the offspring of Eve. And he often launches his attacks stealthily.

3. Embrace God's operation .

Listen to this quote: "When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, then the real work of Christmas begins." God is weaving everything together to accomplish His will. The happenings of history work out in a way that will bring Him ultimate glory for He is the God of history. There is nothing that surprises Him, nothing that slows Him down because He rules and reigns. King Herod was strong but he was nothing compared to King Jesus. Life is often not like what we planned. Blahs come, plans change, life happens but God is great and He is good and He's in charge.

We see God's providence all over this. This word means "the care exercised by God." He takes care of us and prepares us for what hasn't happened yet. That means He brings blessing from brokenness and triumph from tragedy. God provided provisions for the journey. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were liquid assets and easy to transport. God fulfilled prophecy. God is always present. He never left Joseph and Mary to figure things out alone. He was with them, reminding them that Herod could not kill hope.

God doesn't always tell us everything about the future, does He? If you want to know God's will then do the will of God that you already know. Many times we ask God to tell us what to do and God says, "I've already told you in my Word but you're not doing what you already know." It's very interesting that God did not tell Joseph to go to Nazareth until he had first obeyed and went to Judea. The old adage is true: "God doesn't steer parked cars." If you want God to guide you, then start moving on those things you already know He wants you to do. Ray Pritchard says it like this: "If you really want to know God's will, you'll know it." Here are six clear commands:

- * Put God and His kingdom first in all things. Matthew 6:33
- * Read His Word daily. Psalm 1:2
- * Practice sexual purity. 1 Thessalonians 4:3
- * Give on a consistent basis to the work of God in the world. Malachi 3:10
- * Encourage others and challenge them to grow. Hebrews 10:24
- * Make Sunday attendance a holy habit. Hebrews 10:25

Conclusion

Lucy walks up to Charlie Brown just before Christmas and says to him: "Charlie Brown, since it is Christmas, I suggest that we lay aside all our differences and be friends for this season of the year." Charlie Brown responds: "That's a great idea, Lucy, but why does it have to be just at this time of the year? Why can't we be friends

all year long? Lucy looks at Charlie Brown with disgust and asks, "What are you, a fanatic or something?"

Friends, Christmas changes everything. Let's let it change us all year long. Most of us could stand to be a bit more fanatical in our faith.

Be a Faith Fanatic!

Be It Further Resolved . . .

So what's the deal with New Year's Resolutions? Why do we think we can openly make a hopeful statement without exerting any extra effort to see it come true? Here are some stories of failed resolutions.

One young man was at a New Year's party. He asked one of his friends for a cigarette. The friend replied "I thought you made a New Year's resolution to quit smoking?" The young man answered 'I'm in the process of quitting. Right now, I am in the middle of phase one.' "What's phase one?" his friend asked. The young man replied. "I've quit buying."

At the beginning of a New Year, a high school principal decided to post the New Year's Resolutions of his teachers on the bulletin board. As the teachers gathered around to see what each had written, a great commotion started. One of the teachers complained that her resolutions weren't posted. She threw such a temper tantrum that the principal hurried to his office to see why he had overlooked her resolutions. Sure enough, he had mislaid them on his desk. As he read her resolutions he was astounded. This particular teacher's first resolution was not to let little things upset her in the New Year.

A son called his parents to wish them a Happy New Year. When his Dad answered the phone, he asked him, "Well Dad, what's your New Year's Resolution?" His dad replied, "To make your mother as happy as I can all year." When his Mom got on the phone he asked her the same question. She confidently replied her resolution was "To see that your dad keeps his New Year's resolution."

Some have the same attitude as the characters in the cartoon Calvin and Hobbes. Calvin once said, "God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I'm so far behind I'll never die."

On the last day of the 1986 United Methodist General Conference, a resolution was passed to make 9 million new United Methodists by 1994. One pastor questioned this, since their denomination had been losing about 65,000 members every year since the early seventies. He thought to himself just how typical this is. Too often window dressing, sloganizing, and platitudes set us up for false hope and more failure. The truth is, most don't want to make the systemic changes that enable new people to be reached.

So that pastor went home and wrote an article entitled, "My Dog the Methodist." He argued that there was no way in heaven they were going to make 9 million new Methodists unless they started baptizing dogs. Specifically, he offered as a fit recipient for the sacrament of baptism his mixed-breed terrier. He said, "This dog, as far as I know, has shown no interest in biblical studies. Therefore, he holds all the criteria to make a perfect Methodist."

When the article came out in *The Christian Century*, not everyone saw the humor. Some cancelled their subscriptions, and two Methodist bishops haven't spoken to him since. But he was serious. Resolutions are simply words unless we practice the kind of actions that lead to effective change. Unless we intend to really change, resolutions are made in vain.

God Bless You!

Bro. Allan

Opportunities For Service

Living out Your Spiritual Commitment . . . and Fulfilling Christ's Divine Plan

Sunday, December 27, 2015

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: Larry McKahan, Isaac Waters, Ken Kirkpatrick, Bill Schottel

Alternate: Steven Buckley

Diversicare.....2:30 pm

No Evening Worship.....6:30 pm

Wednesday, December 30

No Youth Study..... 6:30 pm

No Prayer / Bible Study6:30 pm

No Adult Choir 7:30 pm

Thursday, December 31

New Years Eve.....No Service

Friday, January 1, 2016

Happy New Year!!!

Sunday, January 3, 2015

Choir Rehearsal..... 9:00 am

Sunday School 9:15 am

Morning Worship.....10:30 am

Observe the Lord's Supper

Nursery: Volunteers as needed

Ushers: Steven Buckley, Ken Nice, Don Sharp, Fred Kerns

Alternate: Larry McKahan

No Evening Service.....6:30 pm

Monday, January 4

Food Kitchen.....5:30 pm

Wednesday, January 6

No Youth Study..... 6:30 pm

No Prayer / Bible Study6:30 pm

No Adult Choir 7:30 pm

Up-Coming Events.....

December 27 — Diversicare 2:30 pm

December 31 — New Year's Eve

January 1, 2016 — Happy New Year!

January 3, 2016 — Celebrate the Lord's Supper in Morning Worship

January 4, 2016 — Food Kitchen

January 5, 2016 — SJBA Listening Session 6:30 pm Faith United

January 7 — SJBA Listening Session 6:30 pm FBC King City

January 17, 2016 — Collection for Food Pantry

— Fellowship Dinner and Business Meeting

January 18 — Food Pantry Day

GROW Team

Commit to **GROW!** Everyone make a contact! Invite someone to Bible Study and Worship this week. ☺

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Sunday Nights

We will not have Sunday Evening Service here tonight. Watch the weekly schedule to know when we will meet during the month of December.

Wednesday Night Prayer and Bible Study

We will not be meeting this Wednesday at 6:30 pm.

Thanks to all who Helped Adopt a Family

The Lydia Ladies want to show their appreciation for supporting them in adopting a family for Christmas.

Next Sunday, January 3, 2016, we will observe the Lord's Supper.

The Christmas Card Mail Box

is in the hallway by the bulletin boards. Thank you for sharing cards with your church family. Don't forget to check the box for any you might have missed. And remember to contribute to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Food Kitchen

We will serve Monday, January 4, at 5:30 pm. Please feel free to join us as we show the love of Christ and minister to those in need.

Diversicare Nursing Home

Today, December 27, 2015

Please join us as we minister to those who can no longer attend their own churches.

Luncheon and—Business Meeting

Sunday, January 17, at Noon

Please plan to attend and fellowship with us as we share a meal and also conduct the business of the church.

For the Record-

Attendance: December 20, 2015

Sunday School.....	54
Visitors.....	5
Total.....	59
Contacts Made.....	13
Morning Worship.....	81
Children's Worship	N/A
Sunday Night	10
Wednesday Night	32

Financial Record:

Weekly Budget.....	\$ 2,040.52
Offering Received...	\$ 1,289.15
Lottie Moon.....	\$ 1,515.00

Offering Received by Mail:

January Counting Team:

John Lewis and Bill Schottel

January Van Driver:

George Burgess

Remember to call 232-3747 **before 8 am** if you need a ride.

January Member Birthdays:

01... Carol Helean
01... Marcia Hart
16... Sue Higgins
19... Juanita Haskins
22....Eric Thompson
24....Aubrey McCamy
25... Gary Higgins
27... Gary Yarbrough
28... Donna Dunn
29... Sharon Waters

January Anniversaries

Allan and Ellen Lane
Married January 2, 1983

Philip and Kelsey Lane
Married January 3, 2009

Prayer Requests ...

Charlie Lamm—regain strength
Sue Higgins—regain strength
Lois Pace—hip surgery recovery
Flo Conard—health issues
Betty Anslinger—upcoming surgery
Buddy Means—Mary Sharp's nephew
Lois Ulmer—Elvera's daughter-in-law
Maxine Stark—friend of Conard's
Kenneth Hoenshell—friend of Conard's
Maxine and George Ferbert
Bill Haskins—recovery
Joyce Izer—Praise the Lord for healing!
Stacy Gray—cancer treatment
Muriel Elder and Family
Linda Rails—Doris' Richardson's sister
Grant Schottel—advanced training
Henrietta Caballero—Brigida's Sister
Austin Chalfant—Abby's nephew
Gary and Marilyn Singleton—health
Bob Barquist—cancer
Louanne Laurence—Joyce's Mother
Lester Buck Kathryn Beavers
LoLeta Middleton Dorothy Post
Allen Jennings Ann Riddle
Jim Winans Jozy Winans
Nellie Reynolds Leona Reynolds
Kevin Duty Kenny Duty

Madeline Swink Bobby Griswold
Susan Patten Debbie Sands
Brenda Burgess Judy Anderson
Carolyn Houts Roscoe Lane
Keon McKahan Dorothy Post
Missionaries Don and Diane Combs
Nickolay Nazaruk, Peski 2 Church
David and Deborah Grace
Jeanette Swackhamer—Beja People
Our Nation and Leaders
Our Military Service people
Today's Prayer Requests ...

Our Nation and our Leaders ...

Five More New Families...
