

DETOUR

Order of Service (bulletin)

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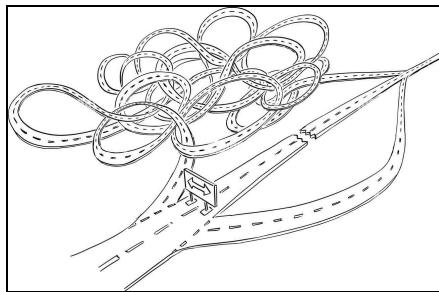
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December 28, 2025

Christmas 1

Matthew 2:13-23

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I have called my Own.” Herod became furious when he realized that the astrologers had outwitted him. He gave orders to kill all male children that were two years old and younger living in and around Bethlehem. The age of the children was based on the date Herod had learned from the astrologers. Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice was heard in Ramah sobbing and lamenting loudly: it was Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, for they were no more.” After Herod’s death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.” Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: “He will be called a Nazarene.”



Luke and Matthew tell explicit but different stories of Jesus' birth. I talked a little bit about this on Christmas Eve at the 7:30 service. Now the common things between Luke and Matthew are that Mary and Joseph are engaged but celebrate when she gets pregnant by the Holy Spirit. They also both say that the child is to be named Yahosua Joshua or Jesus as we pronounce it through the Latin and Greek. This Jesus will be called Messiah and son of David and they both include genealogies that show that Joseph is descended from King David. There are three kind of historical agreed upon details between Luke and Matthew. One is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem like King David, that Herod is the king of Judea and rules from Jerusalem, and that Jesus grew up in Nazareth: a known fact about adult Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell a story of Jesus going to Nazareth and being rejected when he teaches in his hometown synagogue. And Luke actually lists the hometown as Nazareth. The Apostle Paul in the book of Acts is accused of being a leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. And we heard in today's reading that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and was called a Nazarene. And it makes reference to fulfilling a prophecy. Although there is no known Old Testament prophecy that talks about the Messiah being from Nazareth, but certainly when people knew Jesus as an adult, they knew him as

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someone from Nazareth.

Born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth. Now Luke and Matthew get to those two realities in different ways. In Luke we have the familiar story of traveling for the census. So that they start in Nazareth: Joseph with pregnant Mary. They make their way to Bethlehem for the census. And while they're there, Mary gives birth to Jesus. They spend about a month in the suburban Jerusalem area. And after Mary has performed the rituals of the 33 days after her birth at the temple, they return back to Nazareth directly. And today we heard Matthew's version of how they get to Nazareth. And it's a little more of a complex route. I mean, they start in Bethlehem. Matthew starts the story with the family already in Bethlehem. Doesn't say how they got there. Doesn't say whether they had been there for a while or whether they were just visiting. Matthew starts the story in Bethlehem. And there's a story we'll read next week about the astrologers coming. You can see they're getting a little bit closer. We're doing the story a little bit out of order today. The astrologers have come and visited Jesus. They find Jesus where he's staying. They bring gifts and presumably that's where they're going to be according to Matthew.

Joseph, as is often the case in Matthew's gospel, Joseph listens to his inspiration. He has dreams that are instructive for him. And so he listens to the voice in his dream that says, "It's not safe for you to stay here in Bethlehem." For as we heard today, King Herod worried about a threat to his throne, worried about people claiming Jesus to be the son of David. Jesus being Christ, Messiah, the anointed one, the one in David's name who will lead and redeem Israel. Herod is concerned about his position as the king of Judea. And so unable to get the cooperation of the wise ones, he's left with trying to get rid of Jesus by getting rid of all the potential Jesuses. And based on the time that the wise ones said, the star appeared to them, Herod says, "I'm going to take no chances and I'm going to go after every boy in Judea who's two years older." But when they get to Jo Jesus' house, they get to Joseph and Mary's house in Bethlehem, they're not there because they've made a trip. As we heard today, they made their way away from Bethlehem. They went the opposite direction that the wise ones went. They were heading back east. Joseph and Mary and young Jesus, maybe as old as two years old at this point. They make their way to Egypt. We're not sure exactly how long they stay there. Could be a year, could be a couple of years, could be even a little bit more.

They make their way to Egypt. And you can imagine what it must have been like for them to go to a place where they didn't speak the language, where they were the outsiders, they were the refugees, they were the migrants coming into a fairly well established nation with thousands of years of history. And imagine what it must have been like for them when they got there. Maybe they were able to seek out other people of their tradition. Maybe there was a community of diaspora Hebrew people living in Egypt. But either way, they had to adjust and learn to live in a new place, in a new way. Think of all the things that Jesus and his family would have learned when they were in Egypt. They very likely learned at least to get by in Egyptian languages. They learned what it was like to feel a bit on the outside and maybe learn how to fit in and how to maintain your own identity at the same time. Maybe they received negative responses. Maybe people saw them as the illegal migrants who crossed the border. Maybe Egypt's version of border control or ICE or Canada customs was looking for them. I wonder if their family felt safe. Matthew doesn't give us any details. So all we can do is just imagine what it must be like for someone living in a place like that.

There are folks all around us in our communities who've come from other places who've learned to maintain who they are and yet learn the new culture, learn maybe a new language. I wonder how that helped set Jesus up for the years of ministry that followed. Did Jesus learn from being the outsider that part of his ministry was going to be to welcome those on the edges into the center? Did Jesus learn from his family and probably young Jesus learning to speak a different language? Did that help Jesus when people from all other places

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other than Judea and Galilee came to investigate what Jesus was doing. This detour that they went on set a foundation for Jesus' life from the very beginning.

And so when Joseph had heard that Herod was no longer the ruler in Judea, they felt like they could go home again. And it sounds like the way Matthew puts it, they were getting ready to go back to Bethlehem to the Jerusalem area. But then in the dream, Joseph again trusts the voice that says, you know, Herod's successor might still not create a safe place for you to live with your family.

So maybe don't go back to where you were in Bethlehem, but turn north and head to Nazareth. A new town. In a new part of the Hebrew experience, people there spoke with a different accent. Jesus would have experienced a new kind of classism and exclusion. Galilee was never quite as good as Judea for the people who lived in the south. There was a different political structure. It was a different province of the Roman Empire.

When young Jesus grew up in Nazareth, I imagine that he remembered those formative years in Egypt and the things that Jesus learned from being the one on the edge. So that decades later he moved again to a new town and met new friends along the shores of a sea and started to talk about what it is to walk and move in God's way. That Jesus kept those early lessons front and center and saw the refugee as kin. Jesus saw the one who was pushed to the side as someone who needed to be welcomed in. All because of that detour and Joseph trusting his instincts that there was a path that was good and safe for his family.

Let's pray. Thank you, God, for all the things that inspire us to be more welcoming, to be more Messiahlike, to be more faithful followers of Jesus' way. Amen.

#158MV Dream a Dream

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