

1.4.2026 Second Sunday After Christmas (Matthew 2:19-23)

In 1876, the chief engineer of Britain's post office stated, "The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys." In 1903, the president of Michigan Savings Bank told Henry Ford's lawyer, "The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty - a fad." And in 1977, the founder of Digital Equipment Corporation claimed, "There is no reason for anyone to have a computer in his home."

We're now four days into the new year, and as usual, there's no shortage of predictions for what 2026 has in store for us, but certainly most of the predictions we hear will be about as accurate as what the co-founder of 20th Century Fox said back in 1946, about the future of television. He predicted, "Television won't be able to hold onto any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Clearly, we aren't very good at predicting the future, but as we look back on the past year, and those that have gone before, there's one thing we can all say about the future with complete confidence. The prophet Jeremiah said it this way, "*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness*" (Lamentations 3:22-23). Our lives change with each passing year, but God does not. His steadfast love never ceases, His mercies never come to an end, because "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8). Our Lord and our God, who dwells in us and we in Him, declares, "*I am the LORD, I do not change*" (Malachi 3:6), and therefore, in this often chaotic, ever-changing world, we find rest in the blessed assurance that the things that happen around us, can't change the Truth that lives in us.

The things that happen around us, can't change the Truth that lives in us. This is a message presented throughout the New Testament, and it's the message clearly presented in our Gospel reading this morning. The passage we read today is part of a larger narrative in which Joseph, Mary, and the Christ child are rushing from Bethlehem to Egypt, and from Egypt to a city called Nazareth. In this narrative we see the Holy Family facing difficult challenges, life-threatening trials, and many significant changes to their way of life, and

reading these verses reminds us once again that when God became man He did not spare Himself from the trials and sorrows of this earthly life.

Last Sunday, on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, we remembered an unthinkable trial, an unimaginable sorrow, and the passage we read this morning continues where we ended last week. You'll remember that Herod, after he realized that the Wise Men weren't coming back to tell him where to find the Christ child, became enraged and ordered the execution of all male children two years old and younger who lived near Bethlehem. When this order was given, Scripture tells us that the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, *"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"* (Matthew 2:13). At the angel's word, Joseph got up, took Jesus and Mary, and in humble obedience left immediately for Egypt (Matthew 2:14).

We don't know how long the Holy family stayed in Egypt, but the verses we read this morning tell us that *"When Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young Child's life. And he arose, and took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there: and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth"* (Matthew 2:19-23).

When you read these verses, and picture Joseph and Mary rushing from Bethlehem to Egypt, and from Egypt to Nazareth in order to protect our Lord from an evil, murderous king, there's a sense in which the danger and the many unexpected changes they're forced to confront parallels every human life. God didn't spare His Son from the trials and sorrows of this earthly life, and Jesus didn't promise us peace and prosperity in this world. Instead, He said, *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows..."* (John 16:33).

We're promised difficulty and trouble, and the example St. Joseph continually sets for us, the way he shows us to respond to hardship, is with

immediate obedience. At every turn, he confronted difficult, sudden change with humble obedience. Each time God sent Joseph a message, telling him to *Arise*, in the middle of the night, and take Mary and the Christ child to Egypt, Israel, or Nazareth, he simply did what God told him to do. He didn't object or ask for an explanation, he just packed up everything and faithfully responded.

His faithful example also reminds us of a pattern we see throughout the Bible of those who love God responding to His call with immediate obedience. When God told Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father's house to go to an unknown land, He "*departed as the LORD had directed him*" (Genesis 12:4). When God asked Isaiah, "*Whom shall I send...*" the prophet immediately replied, "*Here am I! Send me*" (Isaiah 6:8). When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to be fishers of men, "*immediately they left their nets and followed Him*" (Matthew 4:20-22). When St. Paul's sight was restored and he was baptized after meeting our Lord on the Damascus road, he immediately "*proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God*" (Acts 9:20)

And, in this Christmas season, as we consider examples of immediate obedience, our thoughts also naturally turn to St. Mary and her faithful reply when the angel Gabriel said to her, "*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee*" (Luke 1:28). When Gabriel came to her, he outlined a plan for Mary's life, not a plan that promised peace and prosperity, but a plan that would *pierce* her soul (Luke 2:35), and yet she responded immediately and faithfully, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word*" (Luke 1:38).

What we see in these examples, written for us, are people who love God, people who as we heard from St. Peter last Sunday don't chase their own selfish desires, but instead are "*anxious to do the will of God*" (1 Peter 4:2). None of us can predict what 2026 will bring, but we know that when we respond to trials, sorrows, and difficult unforeseen changes with immediate obedience to God, we are literally, step by step, block by block, building our lives on Him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of a wise man who built his house upon a rock, "*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was*

Founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:25). In the coming year, by the grace of God, may we respond to *the steadfast love of the Lord*, and His mercies that are *new every morning*, like saints, with immediate obedience. building our lives on that Rock, which is Christ, to the end that when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon us, we will not fall, but instead, inside this mighty fortress which is our God we'll find peace and rest in the blessed assurance that the things that happen around us, can't change the Truth that lives in us.