

Christmas 2, January 3, 2010

Jeremiah 31: 7—14, Psalm 84: 1—8, Ephesians 1: 3—6, 15-19a,  
Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

## The Collect

**O** God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The front page of the Tribune this morning carries three stories about people in need, in need of health care, in need of income other than food stamps, in need of safety for children. This Sunday is Christmas 2, the tenth day of Christmas, and still we live with major sinfulness in God's creation that is wonderfully created and more wonderfully restored. We gather as faith community to hear good news, to come to believe in hope, to be renewed as we are re-membered as the Body of Christ in the Eucharist.

And so we have the words of Jeremiah to those in captivity in Babylon, those of the Northern Kingdom taken away into a foreign land. Mark these words well, for they are the cheerful ones from the great prophet Jeremiah. He speaks of restoration of that part of God's creation. The people of the Northern Kingdom will be ransomed, and return home. There will be food, water, income, and joy enough for all. The people will once again sing God's praises in their homeland.

We read these stories from many hundreds of years ago because history repeats itself. Today, as always, people are hungry, sick, without adequate resources, and lonely. A cynic might ask, "Where is God in all of this?" God is where God always is, with us, whether mourning or rejoicing, challenging or encouraging. God the Creator cares deeply for creation and inspires the created to act to restore the broken places of creation. Including sending the usually dark prophet Jeremiah to speak of restoration.

Including sending the only Son of God to all of God's people, for all time. Would not one think that when God does this, it would be smooth sailing for

the Word made flesh? And, yet, even the best-laid plans of God seem to go astray. Or, do they? That nasty King Herod, killer of many of his own family members, is told to be a mortal threat to this infant. It is not the CIA or the FBI or Interpol or Mossad that brings this terrifying intelligence to Joseph and Mary, but dreams. Dreams to the Magi, warning them to return home by another way. Dreams to Joseph to get up, take the Child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Egypt? Don't we remember a story in which the Hebrews flee Egypt, where they had been held in captivity, to journey in the wilderness for 40 years until they learn how to be God's people? Is this God's plan or some travel agent's who has a cousin with a tenement in Cairo?

Or, maybe, God is making this work. Matthew writes for the Jewish-Christian community, to people to have the Hebrew Bible well in their lives. They know that in God's good time, kairos, God raises up a mighty prophet to lead the people out of bondage into freedom. That prophet is Moses.

So, in our gospel today, we hear about the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, and in another dream Joseph learns that it is safe to return home to Nazareth. This fulfills yet another prophecy, that "He will be called a Nazorean."

Dreams, not government intelligence. Dreams, not diagnostic tests. Dreams, not therapy. All excellent tools. The tools available to Joseph and Mary are dreams. Dreams that we still have.

We have seen people's lives changed for the better because God comes to them, perhaps in a dream, perhaps in a tragedy, perhaps in an empty spot. Or, just maybe, through another person, one who has lived through these experiences and has survived, survived because Jesus is born, God is the Creator, and the Holy Spirit continues to be active in our lives. People right here at St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Morro Bay, have lives transformed and are catalysts for transformation in others. When we can dream that we can be those catalysts, then the front page of the Tribune will have stories about the excellent health care available to all, the strong economic sector, the reasonable housing market, safe homes for all of God's children. Then we can know that we are no longer in captivity, captivity of our fears. We will sing out, "Christ the Savior is born," and God again gives us new birth.

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