

Holy Innocents

Kenneth Korby

Matthew 2:13–23

Greeting

Grace and mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Legacy: Celebrating the Care of Children

My dearly beloved brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a bishop in the church, there's one thing I would like to leave as a legacy—or there are many things, but one of them is this: that the church in these days would make of the celebration of Christmas, from Christmas Eve at least through this day, a high and concentrated celebration on the care and nurture of children in the life of faith.

For we see in this text today how dangerous it is for young people to live in a world where the government, the military power or police force and the religious learned conspire against the Christ to destroy the work that he, the child, does for us who are children of God. It is about that that I want to preach.

Children in a Dangerous World

For in our time children live in a dangerous world. They live in a dangerous world, not only because of violence and abuse and of murder. They are not the only ones who get killed before they have much of a chance for life, but they are abused also by neglect and by distortion of what is taught to them about God, about themselves, about holy Church, and about their life of work and service to praise God in the world.

One of the themes that I would like to preach on would be the way by suffering and silence, they praise God. For we often think that we must make noise to praise him. But they did it silently and with suffering for nothing that they had done except having been born.

But that's not where I want to concentrate today.

Herod and the Problem of Government

I concentrate, first of all on the government and its purposes. Herod had a problem with succession. He had a problem with his own throne and power because he knew the ancient words: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes.” And he was not of Judah’s tribe. And here he is King. And now the rumors are that the King of the Jews is born.

It is almost as if a president running for office today insists that he is not going to make the gay lesbian life a legal way of life, so that everybody can do as he wills, and that he is not going to stand against the wanton murder of little children in utero, for he would have a problem getting elected.

The problem of government of its own control of its own succession is a deep problem, and it is a problem that always pits itself against the will of God. Although God uses government to give us many blessings and puts many righteous people in government who are blessed beyond their knowing, when the government is perplexed, we see in this text of Herod, he was perplexed by this and the whole city.

The Church and the Powers That Be

They go to the religious leaders to find out where this child is to be born. The Magi had gone to the same place. They had come to Jerusalem wondering where this child was, thinking that the king would be born in the capital. Obviously they received information and learned where he was, and Herod wanted and received the same information. It was from the religious scholars, the Bible scholars, the men with their ThDs, who informed the government because these religious leaders were restless and the whole city with them.

For the church often seems to depend upon the political pleasure of the powers that be. Belly up, do whatever is necessary, quiet down, keep a low profile, get into the White House for a prayer breakfast if possible.

And somehow or another, she sees her future tied there. The roaring of the dragon, the belching of the dragon, the spewing out of the dragon’s destructive powers, the rage of the dragon, the spite of the dragon chases her.

She’s always on the run, always in the wilderness and the food by which she is fed for one thousand two hundred and sixty days is a secret food. The world does not know about it, but

the religious leaders in cahoots with the government make a very dangerous situation for the children of the world and the church.

The King Child Flees to Egypt

The king child is not controlled by them. This little child who now flees for his life is the fullness of the King child from God.

He goes to Egypt because in Egypt was the epitome and the parable of the slave pit. Government and power conspiring to destroy, to suck the life out of the believers and to destroy their progeny.

He goes not in great pomp, but in flight, like a deer, a hart panting after the water brooks. For he is coming out of Egypt to fill up the forgiveness of sins for his people.

The Wise Men Know Him

There were wise men who came to worship this child. They had come to worship Jesus. They too needed Holy Scripture. The learned who would instruct them: “Where is this boy, this King child of the Jews?”

And they learn from Holy Scripture where to look for him. For you did not just make a cock—and-bull story and brew up some idea about what kind of king child we’re going to have.

It is this Jesus of Nazareth who is not stopped even though he flees like a rabbit being chased. He is not stopped by the plan. And the wise men know him.

They worship him, but they are also wise, for they do not—they are not bamboozled by the government’s pretended passion to worship: “Let me know where he is. I would like to worship him too.”

The church lives in the world, prays for the government, and is obedient to the government, except where it is the attack on that Christ and his gospel.

The Wise One from Heaven Tricked the Satanic One

The wise men were not deceived. They tricked Herod. It is always that way.

Pilate, the rulers, the temple, tabernacle, the people, the mob all put Jesus to the cross, to the grave, thinking that they had killed the Lord of life. But it was not quite that way, for the wise

one from heaven tricked the Satanic one, the law that accused him, the devil that attacked him all lost their teeth and their power by him.

He is the one for whom the government of God rests. The king and head of the church.

The Holy Innocents Around the Altar of the Lamb

The children, they are heirs of this king child, those little boys around Bethlehem, and the bitter weeping of their mothers did not alter the fact that what the church says and confesses about them is true. They play now around the altar of the Lamb. Wherever the Lamb goes is where they are, and they have palms in their hands. Saint John's imagery in his gospel and in the Book of Revelation of the victory of the believers, of the saints. And their crowns are bright.

We do not merely kid ourselves with some myth as if the fact were something else. This is the fact.

"Cease Your Weeping, Rachel"

And so the church is told, and we are told, and we listen to Jeremiah: "Cease your weeping, Rachel. There is hope in your future."

That is, the mothers are addressed, the adults must be addressed, and the church ought to get back on her feet. We are standing on our heads. We teach the children and bless the adults. Jesus taught the adults and blessed the children.

The word is to the mothers. "Rachel, do not weep. There's hope for your future. Your work will be rewarded."

So may the Mother church listen to the prophet, imitate the child and the virgin, and be engaged in a world where, when government, military power and police force, the law and the religion gather together in cahoots with each other, whose purpose is contrary to Christ, that there the church will teach her children, and her children will be among the happy and the blessed martyrs of God. The peace of the Lord be with you all.

SOURCE

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Transcribed from an audio recording of a sermon by Kenneth F. Korby (CTSFW Media). [unclear] marks words that could not be made out.