

Sermon- Our Saviors Lutheran Church – 12/30/2018- 1st After Christmas
Text- Matthew 2:13-23

New Road Taken

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Worship and Music Team had designed this Sunday as one that would not have a homily. Probably thought that this Pastor needed a break from the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day marathon. But as you can see, I overrode them. We need a message today, albeit a short one.

On this the 1st Sunday we find ourselves in what we could describe as “post Christmas syndrome.” Many of us have descended upon the mall to either secure those post Christmas bargains or queue up to the return counter to get rid of those gifts that just won’t work for you or any other sane human being. After the endless days of feasting we have reaffirmed again our desire to shed those pounds and to take better care of our bodies. In most cases our visitors have returned from whence they came and our homes have returned to some sense of normalcy, albeit as normal as it can get with children still home from school. Yes, life has returned to normal in Lake Wobegon and here in Neenah.

In my neighborhood on the north side of Appleton some discarded trees are already showing up on the curb. I always smile at that. As you know, I grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., the son of immigrant parents who hailed from the Holy Land. Christmas was never over until Epiphany - one week from today. Trees remained up until then and were never taken down before. 12 days of Christmas.

For those of us who have come today, there is a recognition of why we are here. We come to have forgiveness reaffirmed, to hear the word of God, to be refreshed at His table, to have our battery recharged.

The word of God that we hear today is the Gospel story of the aftermath of the birth and the evil character Herod. It’s not a pretty story. It is a story of mayhem and intrigue. Joseph has a dream- get out of Dodge- trouble is brewing. Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus leave for Egypt. Herod goes ballistic and goes on a rampage destroying homes and families hoping that the new baby King is among the ruins. When Herod dies, they are again on the move but avoid Judea because

Herod's son rules there and so they settle in a little dusty nothing town called Nazareth, which didn't even have a Starbucks.

It's a story about post Christmas realities. The real world after the gifts from the wise guys, and the angels, and the shepherds. In other translations of the Bible it says, "They Left by a Different Road." Hold that thought. They left by a different road.

We have our own post- Christmas realities. Tax bills are due tomorrow- always a year end reality. Master Card and Visa and American Express bills have arrived. Did we really spend that much? Post Christmas shock. And for many of us, the realities are filled with much heavier things than bills.

The doctor appointment to discuss the biopsy.

The appointment made with the marriage therapist. How did we get here in this situation.

Our family is struggling with communicating. No one is talking with each other.

My job feels like a yoke around my shoulder.

Yes we have big stuff after Christmas.

To this post- Christmas world comes a word- so powerful- so encompassing-yet so simple- EMMANUEL. God With Us!

That's the message for today. To this real post-Christmas world God is with us to help, comfort, sustain and strengthen us. Actually he was born for that reason.

In a few days we have New Years Day. Sometimes we make resolutions, most of which we break in a few days. Today I want us to do such a task here in church. Centering on the phrase - They left by a different road. Let's take a different road in 2019 filled with God's spirit. You and I both know that we all need a different road.

So fill out the sheet. God will help you take a different road in 2019. How do I know that? Simple. EMMANUEL- God is with us.

(Congregation fills in the sheet- Different Road In 2019.)

Amen. Let it be so.

