

22 March 2006  
Lent 3 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

### “Out of Egypt I Have Called My Son”

Seven years of famine were about to descend upon Egypt. Seven years of agony. Seven years of death. But God had pity on Egypt – a nation that didn’t even acknowledge Him, much less worship Him. And He sent them a saviour, Joseph, through whom He warned them about the famine, planned for their deliverance, and made Egypt the hope of all the nations around them. And so when the famine began, the storehouses were not only full, but overflowing. The food lasted not just a few years, but all seven years. And the nations around Egypt all emptied their coffers to buy food and feed their starving families. By God’s hand, Egypt had become the bread-basket of the world.

And how did Egypt show their gratitude for such mercy and grace? By putting God’s people, the descendants of Joseph, into the chains of slavery. But not only that, even though Egypt’s children were saved by the God of Israel, they thanked Him by throwing Israel’s children into the Nile. What depths of ingratitude, of thanklessness.

But what about us? Are we any better? It’s easy for us to sit here in America, over 3,000 years and 5,000 miles from Egypt, and wag our fingers at that bad, bad nation, and pat ourselves on the back for our piety. *Thank God we’re not like them!* We’d have been thankful. We’d have stopped the baby killing. . . . Right. Stop kidding yourself. *We’re just like them.* God gives blessings and do we thank Him, or look for some reason to credit ourselves, and our work, and our planning, and our efforts? Our babies are being slaughtered in Nile Rivers called “clinics,” and how many fingers are we raising to stop it? Seriously. And how many people do we enslave to our own selfish wishes, wanting them to do *what* we want, *when* we want, *how* we want? We have met the Egyptians, and they are us.

And really, that’s the way Israel had gone as well, even while enslaved in Egypt. For though they lamented their bondage, they were, in many ways, quite happy with life under Pharaoh. And it’s their later words and actions that unmask them. No more than a few days after they left their chains behind, they were already belly-aching to Moses about bringing them out of Egypt. If they weren’t complaining about the water, they were bickering about the manna. And if they weren’t bickering about the manna, they were whining about the terrain. And if they weren’t whining about the terrain, they were criticizing Moses himself. Moses probably

felt like he was taking care of a nursery full of bawling, dirty-diapered babies most of the time.

What depths of ingratitude, of thanklessness. Egypt, Israel, you and me. Repent. Do not think, ***“Thank God I am not like those sinners,”*** but confess ***“Lord, have mercy on me, the sinner.”*** (Lk 18:9-14)

*And He does!* For what the Lord accomplished for Israel, He has also accomplished *for you*. Not because *they* deserved it; not because *we* deserve it; but purely in His great love for us. And so down into Egypt the Lord sent Moses, staff in hand, as His chosen man. But no Moses did the Lord send down to save you! No, if you want something done right, do it yourself. So down into this world the Lord Himself came, not as an 80 year old man, but as the Babe of Mary, our own flesh and blood, to rescue us from the Egypt of our sin and death.

*For consider:* against Egypt, through Moses, the Lord sent ten plagues, culminating in the ninth and tenth plagues, when three days of darkness engulfed Egypt, followed by the death of all the firstborn sons of Egypt. And Pharaoh finally buckled, and let His people go. . . . *In the same way*, when the Son of God came to free us, He plagued and attacked the king of hell – not with locusts or hail – but time and time again with His living Word, until in the end, His work culminated as He endured the three hours of darkness on the cross, followed by His own death – as the firstborn of the Father. And with that, Satan buckled. **No**, He was crushed. And we were set free. The Lamb of God had taken away the sin of the world. *All of it!* The sin of Egypt, the sin of America, the sin of you and me. He is *our* Passover Lamb, whose blood marks not a doorpost or crossbeam, but marks your heart. For that blood of Jesus has been baptized onto you. The blood of that Lamb has been drunk into you. And that blood marks you as His own, shields you from destruction, from death, and sets you free.

And so the Lord has brought His people out of Egypt, *by grace*. He has brought you up out of your Egypt of sin, your captivity to the grave, your bondage to self and selfishness. Not so that we may return to Egypt! But so that we may live. Not in *our* life, but in *His* life – in His grace, His forgiveness, His blessing. *And what incredible blessing!* We heard of the blessing of our fathers, the Israelites, in the Epistle, who ***“were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.”*** But just as our exodus in Christ is greater than the exodus from Egypt, how much greater also our blessing, as the new Israel of God, and the gifts the Father has lavished on us! And so to paraphrase Paul, and put our blessing in the same terms: *We are all under the same Spirit, and all passed through the*

*font; and all have been baptized into Jesus in the Spirit and in the font. And all eat the food of the Spirit, the body of the Son of God, and drink the same drink of the Spirit, the blood of that Son. For all of us open our lips to consume what gushes from the Rock – struck not by the staff of Moses, but by the sword of the Roman soldier. And that Rock is Christ, your Saviour.*

Out of Egypt His people came, and they would never be the same. It was for them a defining moment. And out of Egypt, out of sin and death, you have come, and you will never be the same. For as your Saviour Jesus Christ still comes for you in Baptism, in Absolution, in His Supper, He crushes your foe, forgives your sin, and brings you into His kingdom. Not because you deserve it, because you don't! But simply because of His great love for you. For you are God's special treasure among all the peoples of the earth. You are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Your dark days of exile have come to an end, because the day of salvation has dawned. Your Saviour has come. His death, your death. His life, your life. His home, now your home. And there is nothing sweeter than the sight of Egypt in your rear-view mirror!

Welcome home, O Israel, Welcome home.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.