

The Escape

By Chris Famisaran

To borrow a line from one of my favorite movies of all time, The Princess Bride. "Let me catch you up. No, there's too much. Let me sum up." If you have missed the first couple of weeks, let me sum up the story here. We met Joe and Maria, who are migrant farm workers. But remember, Joe was quite the mechanic, didn't spend too much time in the fields anymore and they had a thing got engaged. But before they could get married, the angel came and told them they were going to have a special child. But that caused a lot of problems and finger pointing people, Oh, she's pregnant, talking. And so they decided to leave. They hopped in Joe's 72 Ford pickup truck that doesn't look like much, but runs pretty good and came to Los Angeles. They're going to spend a few nights camping in the back of the truck, save their precious money not on hotels, and they found a neighborhood with some other RV's and cars parked where they thought they could park and be safe. But that very night, the baby decided he was going to come. And I mean, right then no time to even drive to the hospital or clinic. And some of the women from some of the other RV's came over and helped deliver the baby. And the baby was there and they were so happy that a boy had been born and everybody was kind of oohing and ahing the baby. Just about the time things settled down, some angels appeared to the homeless encampment down the way and the homeless people came running over to see the baby and they were talking about the baby. And then they rushed around, woke everybody up again, knocking on doors, stopping cars, telling them about the baby and the angels that had told him about the special baby that was to be born. Kids were tagged in the name Jesus under the overpass, and Joe and Maria were just wondering what is going on. The Angels said this would be a special child, but is this what this means?

Then last week we saw Joe got a job and they got a little one bedroom apartment. Eventually, Joe moved up and was working at Lockheed Martin and they were able to get a small back house and one of the guys at work had a small little back house. He rented them pretty cheaply. And so that was a big upgrade from the apartment, and they were pretty happy about that. And Joe liked to work on cars. You can often find him out working on a car. A Neighbors car or friend's car. The kids in the neighborhood would come hang out with him, help him work on the cars. One day the kids came and told him that the FBI was

looking for him and then the black SUV showed up. But it wasn't the FBI. It was antiquities scholars from eastern Canada. They had a museum there associated with the University of Quebec, and they had seen the star and had been traveling trying to get there. They followed the prophecies and looked him up in their books and had come to see the baby. They ended up leaving them some gifts, including one of the SUVs, when they saw Joe's 72 Ford pickup truck because Baby Jesus needs a better ride than that. And once again, Joe and Marie are standing there wondering what is going on with.

And so that night, unbeknownst to Joe and Maria, after the antiquities scholars left, the angel came to visit them and said, don't email the governor and tell him that you found the baby. Just go home. And so they did. The antiquities scholars themselves, the PhDs, they got on a plane in LAX and flew home, left a couple of the assistants behind to drive the vehicles home. And they basically got out of Dodge.

See, the reason that the governor hadn't wanted to talk to them when they came through was the governor was really interested in his presidential bid to get to the White House. He was too busy to be worried about some baby. But after a while, it turns out that that presidential bid didn't go quite the way the governor wanted it to go. And now he was back in California trying to shore up his legacy and get things going his way again. And he remembered that baby. So what happened with that baby? I don't know what happened to that baby. So they begin to search for the baby. And the angel came to visit Maria and Joe and told them it's time to go. And I mean now, the middle of the night, leave now. And Joe's first thought was, what do I do with my 72 Ford pickup truck? He loved that truck.

So while Maria got a few things together, some clothes, some baby essentials, grabbed a few family pictures off the wall. Joe signed over the title of his beloved truck to a neighbor kid down the street who liked to help him work on it. Kid was turning 16 in a couple of months, parked in front of his house, left the keys in their mailbox, came back to help Maria finish up packing, threw everything into the SUV and took off. Not a word to anybody. They left a note on the landlord's house in front of them, saying, Sorry, we're gone. Sorry, We left a mess. They left him one of the gold coins that the antiquities scholars had left him and said, this will cover cleaning up our mess and cleaning out the house.

Sorry, we had a family emergency, we got to go. Just like that. They were gone. The black SUV turned out to be pretty useful because already roadblocks were going up. The border checks had been told to check for a child, they were setting up other roadblocks and they were looking for somebody of rather humble origins coming through, not somebody driving a nice new decked out SUV with blacked out windows.

Joe and Maria tried to stay on the back roads, you know, stay off the interstates, the freeways, trying to avoid as much as they can. But even doing that, they ran into a block set up. But you know what? Nobody was looking for parents out in a black SUV at 3 a.m. and they just skated right on through and kept going.

Eventually, they came to a sign that said welcome to Arizona. And eventually a day or two later, there was another sign that said, Welcome to New Mexico. And about halfway through New Mexico, they turned right and hit a sign that said Welcome to Mexico, went down into Mexico, found a little town, nondescript nowheresville and set up. Joe got a job working at the auto mechanic shop in town, and once again, life was normal.

It was a different normal than they had experienced before, but it became the new normal. And Maria was home schooling the child. Brothers have now entered the picture. And Joe works on the cars. One day they're watching the news and they see that the governor has termed out and the people of California have elected a new governor and they wonder if they can go back home. But they come to the conclusion that the angel told them to go. And so they would wait until the angel told them they could come home again. Well, eventually, after the inauguration and not just the election, the angel did show up and say it was safe to go home. So they came back home. Maybe... The angel came (picture finally came up). They came back home.

And this time Joe set up a shop called Joe and Sons and started working on cars full time. And then this shop is where Jesus and his brothers would learn many great skills that would help them in life, not just how to fix a car, but patience of dealing with a rusty, rounded off bolt, the determination of tracking down some kind of wiring gremlin that just won't quit. The forgiveness of dealing with customers aren't always kind and nice. The mercy of trying to help people who

have an old car and are just trying to hold it together because that's all they can afford. And these skills proved to be very useful to Jesus and his brothers.

And we don't hear too much about Jesus till He's about 12. But that, my friends, is a story for another day.

To those of you who just joining us today, we thought it would be great to tag team. And so in true WWE fashion with tagging in tagging out.

Gracious Lord today we've gathered together to close out this series be with us in Jesus name. Amen.

Several years ago Clay Jones wrote an article on Julia Louis Dreyfus. Is that how you pronounce her name? Of Seinfeld and Veep fame. She was attending the Emmys and won an award. And she was so happy and so excited. Less than 24 hours. The next day in the morning, she received a phone call from her doctor informing her that she had cancer. Can you imagine the highs of the previous night working so hard on this? There's this show that she loved dearly and starred in and put everything into it and been recognized for all of the great hard work that she had done, only to be told that, by the way, your life is in jeopardy. Now, of course, she fought and she won and she kicked the cancer out, but she recalls, she said when she heard from her doctor, she said, you know, I howled with laughter. That was my response. Which then in turned into hysterical crying. It was a blow. But now that she was cancer free, she said she had a keen awareness of the dearness of life.

Now it comes and it goes. But once you've walked through a life threatening illness, there's little nagging thing with you all the time. The fear doesn't completely go away because you've been face to face with it. But you know what? We walk through our lives so oblivious to the fact that our lives are going to end. We really don't consider that ever. Almost ever. Maybe it's a good thing, but it's a cold, hard fact. And it's a strange thing to reconcile. Julia was faced with a life and death situation and she thought, Is this it?

Now she was able to overcome it. And when you look at the life of Joseph and Mary and Jesus, their life was threatened. Great. They didn't expect it was the

last thing that they were thinking about. And yet here, if you go and continue in the story of Matthew chapter two, we see that the road that they took was not easy. So let's go ahead and jump to Matthew 2. We're just going to briefly skim over this and some of these verses we've already kind of read. But let's go ahead and continue. When they got an angel of the Lord, this is after the Magi had left and been warned and they take out. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, Get up, He said, Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. And so he got up. This is what's amazing, is he just basically he immediately he's faithful. He follows. He listens. He took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt and where they stayed until the death of Herod so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the Prophet out of Egypt, I called my son. This is something that was said many years before. Israel, by the way, thank you, Israel, for reading that. I appreciate it.

Hosea 11:1. So imagine being Joseph, you're sleeping in in the middle of the night. You get a dream. I wonder if Joseph now he was very faithful, but I sometimes wonder if he ever asked. I didn't sign up for this. And yet he was faithful. Could he have imagined the life that he was about to live? Probably not adopting essentially the Son of God as his child. No pressure. And by the way, they're going to be people who are going to be after you. So the angel warns that Herod will try to kill Jesus. By the way, does this all sound familiar? Did anything similar happen in the Old Testament to perhaps leave and head to Israel in some ways? Sorry, to Egypt also meant that they were exiles.

However, scholars, I did some research, and scholars say that there was actually a rather decent sized Jewish population of roughly a million people at the time living in Egypt. So it's reasonable to assume that Joseph probably knew somebody in Egypt who could help him set up shop as a carpenter. And he probably found a place of employment. And so even in the midst of this uncertainty, God was faithful in caring for them. But if we continue on in the story in verse 16, when Herod realizes that the Magi ignore and go a different way, he's furious, and what does he order to happen? All of the young boys who were two years and under because that was roughly the time that was predicted that Jesus was alive at that point to be brought in and said, Hey, welcome or no, we're going to get rid of you.

As we read earlier, Jeremiah 31, verse 15 or in verse 8 here in chapter 2, says, The voice is heard in the Ramah weeping and mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more. It was already predicted that this horrible thing would happen. Now, just as a side note, though, we sometimes forget verse 16 of Jeremiah 31 says, Refrain your voice from weeping, though, and you in your eyes from tears for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

No, there is a promise Jesus would return. And for us modern people in 2022 about to jump into 2023. It seems this is insane that a ruler would go to the lengths of trying to exterminate all of these young boys two years and younger. Those of you perhaps, who've maybe experienced power, authority or had to deal with somebody who had power and authority, can it be infecting? Can it seep into your souls? Is it easy to give up? No. Can it affect us? Absolutely. Can it corrupt us? And for Herod here, he was so worried about his place. His seat of authority. He was going. He was willing to go and exterminate all of these young boys. Those of you who follow the Lord of the Rings, the movies. When you look at the character of Gollum, could he give up the ring? It was all he ever wanted, the precious.

Now, as we continue in verse 19, after Herod had died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, who they were still in Egypt, in a way exiled. He says, Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. For those who were trying to take the child's life are dead. So it seems like everything is in the clear. But they got up. He took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he had heard that archeologists or Herod commands was raining in Judea and the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there. Why would he be afraid? Well, history tells us that prior to this point, before Herod was given authority, there was an uprising and over 3000 people were killed near the temple trying to squash. So naturally, Joseph, it's like, don't want to be around this. He's warned They withdrew to go to go. And he went and he lived in a town called Nazareth.

So what was filled with is said through the prophets that he would be called. And that story. Now, if you also read the Book of Luke, who was also from Nazareth, Mary, more than likely probably her hometown. So what can we take from all of

these all of these scenes here? Is that for Joseph especially faithfulness required heading into the unknown.

Why did God just talk to Joseph in the middle of the night when he was dreaming? And so it was there, though, that he could directly speak to Joseph. And Joseph was faithful, even not knowing what was going to happen to get up and go to a different country. Some of you have experienced that leaving your home country, going to another country, perhaps not even knowing the language. Is that not scary? You know, I thought life was difficult. And then as I got to know people who literally gave up, even my own my own family who are immigrants, but my grandparents and my father, they knew English. Imagine maybe this is the case for you leaving your own country and coming to the United States, not knowing a lick of English and maybe having like 17 bucks in your pocket. But that's faith courage to you, courage to you.

Corey ten Boom also writes "Always trust in an unknown future to a known God." Now we know that God is faithful. We wouldn't be sitting here, right? But sometimes the journey you have your highs and you have your lows. Sometimes they can feel both at times to you, man. So life is full of highs and it's full of lows. The God is faithful. And just as God protected Joseph and Mary and Baby Jesus. God will lead and guide you. I want you to reflect back on this last year, or even just a recent time. Maybe it could be a couple of months, could be a couple weeks. It could be a couple of days. What is one achievement in difficulty in this last period that you've experienced in this last year?

What is one achievement actually, I should say, how has God helped you to achieve something? And in this difficult experience, what is something that maybe you've experienced that God has also pulled you through? And as you reflect back this week, moving forward, may you give God praise and thanks for the good times, the blessings and also his continued faithfulness in the challenging times.

I know Christmas time. The holidays can be a challenging time. We're ending the year hoping, especially next week, heading into a new year. We've experienced promotions, we've experienced loss. We've experienced many things. Some of

them combined. And my friends, I just want to encourage you make the gift of God. God's grace, love coming into this world and ultimately dying for us may bring you courage, even when it's difficult. Sometimes we just don't want to say thank you. But yet, even in the dark times, even when the clouds have gathered, I love the same. The shadow proves the sunshine morning will come and it will be beautiful. So may God bless you. May you have a wonderful Christmas. Even if it may be a very lean Christmas, maybe. I saw this video of I think it was Dave Ramsey because he would do something like this. He took. What are the little things that you put on gifts? Bows. And he took the bows and he put the bows on the faucet, on the toilet, on the roof, on the car. Maybe your gift is being thankful for all that you have. So far, even if it may be small. And for those of you who are blessed with abundance, may you be reminded of where that goodness comes from and may you share what you have with others.

Gracious Lord, you are good and your mercy endures forever. Father, forgive us where we have sinned, where we have said or done something, our shortcomings. Lord, it is only through you that all things are possible. We thank you for your goodness. Lord, we thank you that we've made it thus far. Lord, whatever is on our hearts, whether whatever it is that we are thankful for, perhaps some of us here are grieving, perhaps some of us are struggling. Lord, perhaps some of us, our future is uncertain. We know, though, that Lord, you are a faithful God and will care for us. It may not be something great, but we know that you will sustain us. So leading guidance and may we grow together as one family and may we be the ambassadors that you have called us to be? Thank you, Lord, that you gave up the comforts of heaven to come here. And yet you lived among us. You loved you were empathetic. You were compassionate, and you stood up for what was right and defended those who could not be defended. Thank you, Lord, for fighting our battles. Help us to trust in you in all that we do. And Lord, may we just experience your Grace even more in the next couple of days? In Jesus name, everybody's said Amen.

Grace and peace.