

THE INCONVENIENT PATH

December 28, 2008

The Life of Hans Nielsen Hauge

-Hans Nielsen Hauge was born on April 3, 1771, on the Hauge farm in the Tune parish of Østfold Norway.

-His life corresponded with a time in Norway that was filled with suffering, war, need and great changes -- a situation which was also true for his own life.

-He was born as a lower-class person in the Danish/Norwegian kingdom

His associates, the Haugians, were good farmers, craftsmen, and merchants who came to play an important part in the building up of life after 1814.

April 5, 1796, was the soul-changing day in Hauge's life. While he was working in the fields, he was singing "Jesus for Thee and Thy Blessed Communion." When he came to the second stanza, he later wrote, "My mind was so lifted up to God, that I didn't know myself." This is not the language of a classic conversion from the awakening of Christian faith, but an ecstatic experience with parallels in mysticism.

The experience filled him with certainty that he had a call to witness to others.

He began that same day, first to his family, then to those in his home village, and then to the

neighboring villages.

In 1797 he began to travel around a large part of the country.

Hauge's meetings conflicted with the current Lutheran understanding of the pastor's office and with a declaration from 1741, the Conventicle Act. Its purpose had been to bring the pietistic lay meetings under control of the state.

The pastor (appointed by the state and often not a Christian) was to be informed beforehand and preferably be at the meeting to assure that the preaching was not sectarian or attached to the spiritual or secular authorities.

Hauge was not deterred by the Conventicle Act. Late in 1797 he was arrested for the first time while he was holding a meeting and from that time on, until the fall of 1804, he was imprisoned 10 times. During these years, he traveled over a great part of the country, often on foot, holding meetings and winning converts so effectively that political opposition toward him grew

The persecution and imprisonment that Hauge endured did nothing to detour him from the path that God had given him
Hauge understood that...

Life's Inconvenient Paths Accomplished God's Will

Fleeing by Faith Mat 2:13-23

13When they had gone, 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." **14**So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, **15**where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

16When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. **17**Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18"A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

19After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20**and said, "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."

21So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. **22**But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, **23**and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

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-the wise men had left being told in a dream prior not to go see Herod
-after their departure Joseph was given a vision in a dream from an angel
He was the man of the household and therefore responsible to protect the family
-he is instructed to flee for Egypt

-It should be remembered that there was a large Jewish population in Egypt at that time, especially in and around the city of Alexandria.

-The family would have been inconspicuous during their stay and would have been welcomed by members of their own race.

-the precious items that were given to them by the wise men would not only see them safe to Egypt but would also secure their stay there until Herod's death

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-the despicable ruler Herod was very upset

-the word "outwitted" in verse 16 is more accurately translated "mocked"-the word reflects Herod's feelings of being disregarded and his authority ignored he became enraged

-Herod was a very insecure man and went to terrible lengths to secure power as well as to keep it

-as we wince with displeasure at the slaughter of these infants in Bethlehem and the surrounding area

we would be remiss to forget the 100000 that are murdered every year in our own country through abortion

19After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20and said, "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."

-The death of Herod occurred in 4 B.C. Our present calendar is off in its calculation by about six years. (This would place the birth of Christ at 6/5 B.C. Herod's death is recorded in detail by Josephus,

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-Herod's son Archelaus was brutal like his father but also quite incompetent.

-He inherited Judea

-Early in his reign a riot broke out in Jerusalem during Passover.

-he had Three thousand people killed by his soldiers, a fact which evidently contributed to Joseph's migration to Galilee.

-Archelaus was later deposed and banished from Judea and Samaria by the Roman Government

-once again Joseph is forced to take a

detour from his plans and is forced to settle in Bethlehem
What this flight to Egypt and detour from Judea reveal is that ...

Life's Inconvenient Paths Accomplish God's Will

- if you have read this story before which I'm sure most of you have you might notice something peculiar jumping out at you
- I know when I have read this passage I also felt there was something strange about it
- I allude to the fleeing to Egypt and the avoiding of Judea
- To run away is not something that is synonymous with God's power
- Yet that is exactly what God told Joseph to do
- If there could have been any doubt in Joseph's mind that Mary carried the son of God it would be now
- this is Jesus Christ, God's son,
- this is no ordinary baby
- this is the savior of the world
- this is the most important person that has ever lived
- and when threatened by mere human authority God tells Joseph to run
- the child is young
- Mary and Jesus are both in need of care and consideration
- the power of the Almighty God is with them and he tells them to run?
- they need to settle down
- they need to be around family
- they don't need to go to an inconvenient foreign

- country where they will be forced to use the expensive items that the wise men gave them to survive for several years
- they don't need to make the long inconvenient journey there and back
- they need to start a life and at this time God tells them to run
- the God of the universe
- the God who placed Herod and his son in power
- this God sends an angel to Joseph and tells him to run
- the options at God's disposal for miraculous intervention are limitless
- he could have had Herod killed
- he could have made Jesus invisible to people's eyes
- how about he use the angel he sent to deliver the message to Joseph to instead stand in front of the family and do away with anybody that came near to them to do them harm

Matthew Henry says:

"Joseph and Mary might be tempted to think, "If this child be the Son of God, as we are told he is, has he no other way to secure himself from a man that is a worm, than by such a mean and inglorious retreat as this? Cannot he summon legions of angels to be his life-guard, or cherubim with flaming swords to keep him safe? Cannot he strike Herod dead, or wither the hand that is stretched out against him, and so save us the trouble of traveling to Egypt?"

- There was however more than one reason for God to make this family take the inconvenient path by traveling to Egypt and avoid settling in Judea than just to avoid harm
- In fact there were two other reasons
- first as stated in the passage it was to bring fulfillment to the scriptures
- you will see three instances in this passage where Matthew points out God fulfilling his word
- the other reason for Joseph to take this inconvenient journey we see in verse 15 “Out of Egypt I called my son”
- It is this verse that gives clarity to why it was important for Joseph, Mary and Jesus to take a detour
- The verse in Hosea is not a verse about Jesus originally
- It referred to God rescuing Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses
- Here is where God through Matthew is telling the Jewish people that Jesus is like them
- In a striking beautiful manner the prophesy of Hosea sets forth God’s marvelous Love a love that reclaims and restores
- the prophet Hosea had to marry a wife that was a prostitute
- she went after other lovers and committed adultery
- instead of divorcing this wife Hosea buys her back for fifteen pieces of silver and mercifully restores her to her former position of honor
- When Matthew quotes Hos 11:1 and applies it to Christ it is evident that God regards Israel as a type of Messiah like Jesus

- and just as pharaoh tried to do away with Israel by murdering its young boys so too Herod did the same
- just as Israel was called out of Egypt so too was Jesus
- Just as God provided for and protected his people so God had protected his son not only on the way to Egypt and during his temporary residence there but also on the way back
- And just as God led his people to settle in the promised land of Canaan so too did he lead his son back
- this inconvenient path that Joseph and the family took was to provide a mirror image of the history of Israel
- Its purpose was to show the Jewish community that God has remembered you
- that God desires you to know Jesus as he is the Messiah
- The purpose of the inconvenient path was to express God’s love, empathy and passion for his people to accept His son as his accomplished will
- It is doubtful that Joseph knew at the time why God had put him on this path
- I see this as evident according to verse 22 when it is said that Joseph was afraid
- I’m not faulting Joseph for being afraid goodness knows I would be terrified too
- But it is fear that comes from not knowing what the plans of God are
- Inconvenient paths force us to walk by faith like Joseph did
- Inconvenient paths can cause us frustration, worry and fear like Joseph

- There are many possible inconvenient paths in one's life where there seems no rhyme or reason to it
- Such paths can make us question whether God is in our circumstances or not
- Like when we first looked at the passage it seemed weird for an all powerful God to tell Joseph to run
- God's will is being accomplished through our inconvenient paths
- Rom 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
- we may not be able to see it until the next life but it is absolutely true
- the problem is...

- Many of the authorities, in church and state, thought that a movement led by Hauge, an uneducated peasant might veer off unpredictably in any direction, and was best stopped before it did.
- After several arrests, and releases, he was finally imprisoned in 1804.
- it would be ten years until he went to trial
- In 1809 he was released to work on a project to extract salt from the ocean, and then imprisoned again.
- In 1811 he was permitted to return to farming, and in 1813 arrested and imprisoned again for preaching.
- Finally he was released, in 1814 when his case was examined and reduced to a fine
- Accounts of what Hauge was like after his imprisonment very slightly

- one account said that his health had deteriorated
- another said he was emotionally exhausted
- another I read said that Hauge became a much more tolerant person after being in prison-that one made me anger
- One thing that all the accounts show is that Hauge was broken and he never recovered.
- His health poor, his spirit broken, and his confidence in his mission weakened, probably feeling that his ministry efforts were practically useless when he died on 29 March 1824.
- Hauge's relatives, after his death, fought to get rid of the Conventicle Law, and in 1842 it was repealed.
- Hauge successfully walked the inconvenient path that God laid out for him
- But more often then not...

Life's Inconvenient Paths Are Contrary to Our Will

- Life's Inconvenient Paths Are Often Contrary to Our Will
- we do not want a life of inconvenience
- Our society sells pleasure now
- We desire to have comfort and delight
- We are opposed to inconvenient paths or detours as we do not see what we expect to accomplish
- Is it any wonder why there is a continual and exponential drop in the number of missionaries
- Is it any wonder why pastors often leave when a congregation becomes difficult
- Or why a congregation will oppose a pastor if he is not meeting their immediate needs

- we have allowed ourselves to be infected with convenience so much so that to be inconvenienced even for the sake of God seems ridiculous
- The ridiculous inconvenience of traveling to Egypt was a necessary trip to evangelized the people of Israel
- It was worth the inconvenience so that God's chosen people could recognized their messiah
- Becoming a Christian means desiring God's inconvenient will
- And God's will can be very inconvenient
- For instance You could have slept in. Why are you here?
- you could have enjoyed a nice breakfast and a relaxing morning at home but instead you chose the inconvenience of coming here, and braving the uncomfortable temperatures to worship
- some of you are involved in many inconvenient ministries where there is little or no thanks eg, nursery, sound, computers, coffee and kitchen property management among others
- and you take these inconvenient paths because you want to accomplish God's will before your own
- For what it's worth I thank you
- An inconvenient path that takes us far from our expectations can lead to frustration ambivalence, anger and depression
eg job, marriage, ministry,
- from the day you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior everything, every path inconvenient or otherwise was determined by God almighty

Proverbs 16:9 “In his heart a man plans his course but the Lord determines his steps.”

Walking the Inconvenient Paths of life

- walking the path that Christ has put before us not always pleasant
- and as we have seen in the story of Joseph, incredibly inconvenient
- but as we also saw in the story of Joseph it was exactly the path God wanted him to take for the growing and building of his church

I am going to suggest that we need to do three things in regards to the inconvenient paths of life

- 1) Give the trial the job, the relationship or ministry to God
Resting it in his hands means it is his responsibility not ours
- 2) Empty ourselves of expectations Concentrate solely on obedience
-we may never know the purposes for God inconveniencing our lives, like Joseph or Hans Hauge Eg. work as though serving the Lord or relationship Love with out condition regardless of how the other person treats you
- 3) Don't Resist God's Inconvenient Paths
-ministry, whether it be a Bible study, or a talking to friend about your faith, or leading and participating in a church program or given money to a charity or church, or giving your time to care for others or visit people in hospitals or other acts of compassion will not be convenient but neither was Joseph's trip to Egypt and back but it accomplished God's will

and was necessary for declaring God's love to Israel
then now and in the future

- Hauge died a broken man not knowing what the purpose of his ministry had been or the reason for his suffering
- He died bewildered as to why God had put him on this inconvenient path
- after his death Norwegians were leaving Norway in droves due to ongoing persecution from the government and the Lutheran Church
- They went throughout Europe, Canada and North America
- The went taking the teachings of Hauge
- the teaching included a belief that a person is a Christian not because of the church they go to but because of their belief in Jesus Christ
- they also held to Hauge's example for the need for outreach or evangelism
- in addition they believed as Hauge taught that the church should be free from governmental controls

-Thus the churches had "free" in their name
-As a result of Hauge's influence in Norway there are now numerous free churches in Europe, over 1500 Evangelical Free churches in North America including Winnipeg Evangelical Free Church
Because of the inconvenient Path Hans Nielsen Hauge took two hundred years ago we are worshipping in this church today