

Week 2 of Advent: Preparing to Meet Jesus
(Herod & the Wisemen)

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This is the 2nd Sunday of Advent, a time when we consider the coming of Jesus into our world. The theme today is preparation, getting ready for our relationship with Jesus.

The story today is about a King who doesn't want to give up control and the Wisemen who want to surrender their lives to Jesus. And for us today to consider who are we really the most like in our own hearts.

Who was Herod?

Herod was a king

- He was placed in power by the Roman Emperor, serving at their pleasure
- He could basically rule however he wanted, as long as he kept people loyal to Rome (he would quell any and all uprisings against Rome)
- He ruled with brutality, doing whatever it took to stay in power / control
- He even killed family members to keep his place of authority!
- He was also a builder...he rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem and many other structures
- So basically he was like 'The Grinch' who wanted to steal Christmas...he would go to great lengths to stop Jesus from becoming the King of the Jews
- This is the backdrop to the story found in the Gospel of Matthew 2

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They

told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:
“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least
among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will
shepherd my people Israel”
-Matthew 2:1-6

Three groups of people with three different responses to Jesus’ birth are present in today’s story:

- Herod was troubled
- The Jewish chief priests and scribes were indifferent
- But the Gentile wise men were ready to worship

Today, some of us are:

- Troubled (by life, relationships, loss, and it clouds our faith and view of God)

We get mad at God when we don’t get our way and think, “Where was God when I was going through that horrible time?

Why didn’t God come and make it better?”

- (some of us are) Indifferent (Jesus is no big deal!)
The priests and religious teachers were not studying to find the birth of the Savior...business as usual for them. They weren’t taking the time, paying attention. No big Deal!
- Others are ready to worship like the Wisemen

The wise men were fulfilling the promise made in
Jeremiah 29:13:

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me
with all your heart.”

- Could it be that people who are ready are active in their spiritual lives? Could it be they are the ones praying, reading, worshipping, staying connected to other believers?

POINT: Someone or something will always try to take away Jesus away from us who want to follow him:

- The battle for religious freedom around the world
- In small ways like political-correct language here in our country / watching what we say
- The co-worker or Boss who ridicules your faith convictions
- But in the end, Jesus wins, and he gives his followers the ability to continue their journey of Faith. Hold onto Jesus!!!

How did the wisemen respond to the story of Jesus?

They worshipped him

“After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” -Matthew 2:8-11

They were overwhelmed with emotion and fell on their faces and worshiped Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

- We all know what gold is.
- Frankincense is pretty much there in the name: “incense.”
- Myrrh is actually a gum resin. It was used for pain relief, embalming and also to burn like incense, too.

Question: how many ‘kings’ are mentioned in the story?

Answer: Only two: King Herod and King Jesus! The song of legend “We Three Kings” is because there were 3 gifts...

Back to the Story...

The Wiseman went home a different way after being warned in a dream.

Remember: 3 types of responses: indifferent, troubled, worship

Troubled King Herod lost control (without God):

“Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem

and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more”
-Matthew 2:16-18

When we are troubled and don't seek the Lord's help, we become irrational!

- We make bad choices
- We over-react to things
- We forget the right way to live

The Promise of the story is this: even if some are indifferent (so what?) or troubled (What will I do?) God wins, and gives victory to those who follow him.

- **Let's prepare our hearts today.**
- To the one who is troubled he says: come to me
- “Come to me all that are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest.”
- To the indifferent he says: call on me
- “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.”
- To the worshipper he says: continue in me!
- Where are you at today? How can we pray for you?