

LARGE-PRINT

Devotions for the Week of December 16, 2018

“It’s A Boy!”: Herod Speaks

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, December 16, 2018

Read Matthew 2.

Herod was a cruel king. He had his wife, Mariamne I, executed, as well as two of his favorite sons, Alexander and Aristobulus. Throughout his life, he grew increasingly paranoid, having another son, his oldest, Antipater III, executed just five days before his death. The Jewish people hated Herod as a foreigner and a friend of the Romans. Historian Josephus writes, *“He was a man who was cruel to all alike and one who easily gave in to anger and was contemptuous of justice.”* Herod was quick to defend his throne against any threat.

In the world of the first century an expectation circulated that a ruler would arise from Judea. Roman historian Suetonius writes, *“Throughout the whole of the East there had spread an old and persistent belief: destiny had decreed that at that time men coming forth from Judea would seize power [and rule the world].”*

Herod, with his paranoia and constant defense of his throne, would have seen this coming Messiah, King, as a threat to his reign; therefore, Herod sought to destroy him. First, he asked the Wiseman to find Jesus and return, telling him where to find this new king, so he could go worship him. When the Wiseman did not return, Herod took matters into his own hands, unleashing his anger, and killing every child less than two years of age in Bethlehem.

Herod could not give up Control. Power. Prestige. These drove his life. His need for power and riches got in the way of his discovering the Savior of the world, a Savior for all humankind, both rich and poor, high and low. He was so close. The Christ child was born five miles south of Jerusalem, in the little town of Bethlehem. Five miles. And because of his need for power, for control, he missed Him.

Christ is even closer today. James 4:8 states, “*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*” Yet, so many of us like Herod allow many, many things to come between us and Christ. Like Herod, we often are not willing to give up power, control, prestige, riches, and habits in order to humbly bow before the King of Kings.

Ask God to show you what you need to “let go” of in your life so you might draw closer to Him. Where do you need to give up control? Power? What habits need to change? Open your heart and travel the short distant from your heart to Christ this Christmas.

Monday, December 17, 2018

Read Philippians 2: 5-8.

Paul writes, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*” What mind is that? “*He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross.*” What mind? A mind of humility. A mind that made Himself “*no reputation,*” took the form of a “*slave,*” and considered it wrong to “*be equal with God.*”

James 4:10 reads, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” Last week, we looked at Joseph and spoke of how in many ways he was invisible in the Christmas story, in the background, but never unimportant.

Unlike Joseph, Herod wanted to be front and center, known, famous, revered, and even worshipped. Herod missed out on meeting Christ because of his pride, while the Wiseman, humbled themselves, and bowed down before an infant, opening their eyes to what God was doing.

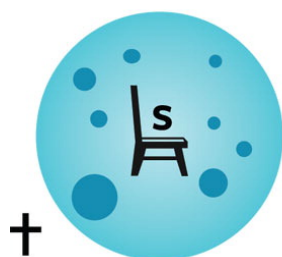
Do you need to learn humility? Is pride getting in the way of your relationship with God? Are you concerned more about your reputation, what people think, being successful than you are drawing close to God? Ask God to help you learn humility.

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

Read 2 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:3.

In this passage, Paul describes three kinds of people. First, in verse 14, Paul describes those who are **not Christians**. Those who are not Christians cannot understand the truths they are being told. He or she does not understand the things of God. This person has not brought Christ (*represented by the cross*) into His life (*the circle*). Furthermore, the person, like Herod, has placed “self” on the throne. The person wants to be “boss,” in charge and in control.

Self-Directed Life



S Self is on the throne

+ Christ is outside the life

● Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration

The second type of person is the **Worldly or Fleshly** person. In I Corinthians 3: 1-3, we read of those in the church who know Christ, but are not living by faith, who are still being controlled by their own “*desires*” and selfish wants. This person


has invited Christ (*the cross*) into their lives (*the circle*), but refuse to step off the throne of their lives and give Christ control. They are still self-directed.

Self-Directed Life

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legalistic attitude • Impure thoughts • Jealousy • Guilt • Worry • Discouragement • Critical spirit • Frustration |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimlessness • Fear • Ignorance of spiritual heritage • Unbelief • Disobedience • Loss of love for God and others • Poor prayer life • No desire for Bible Study |
|--|---|--|

The last type of person is the **Spiritual**. The spiritual person has accepted Christ and has allowed Christ to take the steering wheel instead of ride in the passenger seat. This person has given Christ the throne of their lives and is allowing Christ to control, guide and lead them. Paul talks about this group in I Corinthians 2: 15-16 when he says, “*For we have the mind of Christ.*” Christ (*the cross*) is not only in their lives (*the circle*) but is on the throne.

Christ-Directed Life

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love • Joy • Peace • Patience • Kindness • Goodness • Faithfulness |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life is Christ-centered • Empowered by Holy Spirit • Introduces others to Christ • Has effective prayer life • Understands God's Word • Trusts God • Obeys God |
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Where are you? Have you accepted Christ into your heart, made Him part of your life? If you have accepted Christ, is He at the center of your life? Have you allowed Him to sit on the throne or are you still trying to control and lead things yourself? Pray and ask God to help you give up your throne to the King of Kings, unlike Herod.

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

Read Song of Solomon 8:6.

Solomon writes about love, about marriage, about relationships. He states that “*love is as strong as death*” and “*jealousy as cruel as the grave.*” Don’t we see this with Herod?

Herod is jealous of anyone that might have more power than him, of anyone the people, the Jews, might admire and revere more than him. Instead of opening his heart, he gives into the jealousy that is tempting him, and it leads him to attack those who have more or who he believes has the possibility of more. How often do we give into envy and jealousy of those who have more than us or who receive a special blessing instead of joining them and celebrating with them?

Ask God to show you where jealousy is rearing its ugly head in your life? Are you celebrating with those who are being blessed, as well as crying with those who are hurting? Turn to love and turn away from jealousy for jealousy burns and love lifts up.

Thursday, December 20, 2018

Read Ephesians 4: 26-32.

Herod definitely gives into his anger, allowing it to boil over and lead to the murder of innocent children. Anger is one of many warning signs that we are walking in the “*flesh*” and not allowing Christ to be on the throne of our lives. Others are stress, anxiety, selfishness, and pride. When we sense these warning signs in our lives, we must choose to turn back to God and ask Him to fill us with His Spirit once again. We need to choose to place Christ on the throne of our lives every day, perhaps even several times a day.

Where is anger getting the best of you? Are you stressed, anxious, or selfish? Are these warning signs that, like Herod, you have placed yourself on the throne of your life and are relying on your own power to combat the daily trials of life? Turn to God and allow Christ to take the throne...rely on His power to carry you forward. Instead of anger and worry, allow Christ to fill you with love, forgiveness, and confidence.

Friday, December 21, 2018

Read Luke 2: 1-20.

Read once more the Christmas story. Try to place yourself there, in the manger, with Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus. Try to take in the awesome presence of God felt that night by the shepherds. Take in the awesome presence of God available to you this moment...for Christmas tells us that “*God is with us,*” Immanuel.

Saturday, December 22, 2018

Read Isaiah 9:6-7; John 3:16; Romans 10:9.

Take time in prayer with God tonight & don't forget to invite someone to church tomorrow.

