

**SERMON**  
**A Herod or A Shepherd?**  
Matt 2/ Luke 2

- **Matt 2:1-3**

[2:1] 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, [2] 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.” [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;

- **LUKE 2:[13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, [14] “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”**
- **[15] When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” [16] And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. [17] And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. [18] And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. Luke 2:13-18 ESV**

We’re closing in on Christmas day and we’ve heard the gospel narratives of the Birth of the Savior numerous times, and you might be thinking, “That’s great for the shepherds – they saw and heard the Angels, but that was then and I’m living in the reality of now. I could use some good news of great joy about now.”

These narratives are actually for us today as well. They are VITALLY IMPORTANT to us and to the message of the gospel. But we must not forget that the message of Christmas calls for a response. And we will respond in some way – even apathy is a response.

As we consider these two accounts I want to see two very different responses to the birth of Christ. In doing so we’ll see if we are in the camp of Herod, or in the camp of the shepherds.

**WE HAVE TWO SOCIAL OPPOSITES – Herod, the ultimate insider – rich, powerful, ambitious. The Shepherds – poor, outsiders, no power or influence.**

We’ll see two different responses to Salvation and two different views of worship as we examine

**WHO “GETS THE GOSPEL” AND REJOICES IN IT?**

**THERE IS A DIFFERENT RESPONSE TO SALVATION ATTRACTED OR ANGRY**

**The shepherds heard that God was sending a Savior and they were glad.**

They were ATTRACTED TO THIS BABY. It was this message that was to relieve them of their fear. These were people who recognized their need for a savior, not just another model to follow or a guru or a teacher.

They acknowledged that salvation had to come to them and be given to them because they could not earn it themselves, i.e. SALVATION IS BY GRACE, NOT BY OUR WORKS.

It was GOOD NEWS because they knew they were outsiders, but now they were getting the inside scoop – A savior was born and he saves without distinction. He makes an outsider an insider. The gospel has always been good news to those who are marginal, rejected and hopeless. They know that it takes grace to get on the inside, with God and in life.

Herod, the religious and political insider was “TROUBLED” at the news? He was angry. Why? What was so different about the message of Christmas that threatened Herod and made him want to stamp out the Christ child?

### HEROD DIDN'T WANT THE REAL THING TO SHOW UP

EX: AN IMPOSTOR'S NIGHTMARE IS WHEN THE REAL COMES ALONG  
HEROD WANTED A TIDY ETHICAL, IMPERSONAL AND IRRELEVANT RELIGION.

**HE WANTED God IN A BOX, NOT God IN A MANGER.**

The problem is that it denies the essentials of biblical truth. Man is so bad and so bad off that he can't reach God even if he tries harder.

That is Avis theology - “We TRY HARDER”.

### THAT ISN'T THE GOSPEL.

Christmas is the gospel << we are so lost that we can't patch up our own record, so God had to do it for us.>>.

Herod was troubled because the magi came to WORSHIP the new born king of the Jews. That meant that this king was really different because the Jews knew that only God was to be worshipped. Herod was troubled because the news of the magi meant that a radical change was taking place. No longer was God up there and for us to reach him we have to do our best. Now God is coming down, and he isn't showing favor to the rich and powerful. Jesus, the one “born King of the Jews” bypassed Herod and the powers that be to be born in Bethlehem.

The essence of a Herod Heart is to think that God is impressed by our accomplishments. It is to deny the truth about one's spiritual condition and to deny the necessity of God coming down, denying the necessity of the work of Christ. **Herodism today - those who deny the absolute centrality of Christ and what he did – sounds like this:**

*<< knowing Christ isn't necessary for salvation. All good people who are sincere in their faith, whatever it might be, will be accepted by God.>>*

That sounds so tolerant and accepting, but it is actually very exclusive. This salvation is only for all good people who are sincere. Where does that leave me? Where does it leave all those that the bible describes as “not good”? This view is really exclusive because it **leaves out everybody**. According to the bible “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

That is why Christ came down. “Veiled in flesh the godhead see, hail the Incarnate Deity; pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.”

**If you understand Christmas, then you'll be attracted or offended. A Christian is one who sees the attraction after sensing the offense.** Many people are simply offended and never get past it. The worst condition is all too common – “I believe Jesus came to die for my sins” but you aren't offended or attracted – it just part of the furniture and doesn't move you one way or the other. That's dangerous. – Rev 3:15 You haven't really understood Christmas.

### A DIFFERENT VIEW OF WORSHIP

#### HEROD HEART -

- A) **Second hand religion** – He sends messengers to check it out. How many do this today by sending a husband or wife out to ‘check’ out the church. You can't experience God through someone else. Others can be used to point you to Christ, but their experience can't be yours.
- B) **Herod uses religion and God to get what he wants**, to advance his own kingdom Herod says he wants to worship the child, but his worship is determined by his own agenda..

EX: COTTONPATCH – “if that baby is going to be the new governor, I'd like to shake his hand. I'd like to shake it real good.”

What is really tricky in all of this is that a lot of Herods go to church. One of the ways that we nullify the claims of Christ as being the only Savior is by being religious. For many people religion is a way of avoiding Christ by using him to get something else. Jesus' biggest enemies weren't the sinners nor the roman pagans. His biggest opponents were the religious Pharisees, those who were trusting in their own performance to get them to God.

Do we do the same thing? Yes. How?

EX: Do we only pray when trouble comes?

Jelly Roll : "I only talk to God when I need a favor, and I only pray when I ain't got a prayer. Who am I to expect a savior, if I only talk to God when I need a favor?"

EX: You only go to church when trouble comes, << maybe some religion will help me get my life together >>

Both indicate the same thing- God is important to you when your self-interest is being threatened or served. Something bad happens so you start praying to get out of the mess - that is just using God. Something good happens, so you might "give thanks" because inside you're really superstitious, not sincerely thankful. << I better give thanks to God so that something like this might happen again.>>  
**If you're a Herod, then God is only meaningful when he fits into your agenda.**

### **SHEPHERDS AND WORSHIP -**

- A.) First hand relationship. They went to worship and it was sincere.
- B.) They weren't using God, they were amazed that God would come to them. They saw that what God was doing was the ultimate issue, that God is the ultimate value. They went away glorifying and praising God.

**How do you glorify something?**

To glorify is to honor, it is to make known that this person or thing is your ultimate value, that it is your life, that it is your source of identity and well-being. It is your significance. The word glory means heavy, weighty, important, fame, reputation. The Glory of God is His importance. For the shepherds to go away glorifying God means they left struck with a sense of God's importance, of His centrality to their lives. To glorify something is to live in such a way as to show that it is your greatest treasure.

**EX: A WOMAN is glorified when a man gives up everything else to have her.** << she is all I need>> We see this all the time in love songs : <<WHEN A MAN loves a woman, he can't think about nothing else... I can't live, if living is without you >> << lost without your love. Life without you isn't worth the trouble of. >> etc.

**God is glorified most in us when we hope most in him, when our hearts are satisfied in him and we find him to be the most beautiful treasure we have, when in the midst of trials and despair we cry out to him and find our consolation in Him.** When we have Christ applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we have the spiritual capital we need to stand firm in times of attack and to rejoice in times of affliction.

**What is the proof that our hearts are resting in and feeding on all that God is for us in Christ?**

**God is glorified when our lives say, << I'd rather be faithful to God than be popular with men.**

**.....I'd rather follow God, even if it is hard and requires sacrifice, than take the easy road.** I will live by faith in what God says rather than living by what is seen and felt. ... .I'd rather reflect what God is like by being patient and gracious when losing than getting angry and being a bad sport.>>

- ◆ WE aren't so shaken and undone by the ups and downs of life. A loss or disappointment doesn't drop us as low, and a victory or success doesn't take us as high. We're not dependent on circumstances or events to give us the spiritual, emotional or psychological capital we need for living the Christian life.
- ◆ WE aren't as anxious and fearful nor are we beaten down by a feeling of condemnation.
- ◆ THERE is a certain calm and peace that reigns in our hearts even when the things we were trusting in fall apart. Our lives are increasingly characterized by an inner peace and joy because our hearts are increasingly resting on and satisfied with Christ who is our glory.

- ◆ We're constantly getting rid of the "but also's". << sure I'm satisfied with knowing Christ, but I also need this to make me happy or to give my life meaning or to feel good about myself.>>. Our "but also's" are what the Bible calls Idols, i.e. what we put in place of or alongside of God for our meaning, hope, security and worth.

You glorify God by focusing on what you have and can never lose in Christ so that you're able to endure with supernatural joy and peace the loss of anything here on earth. God is glorified when our life bears witness to the reality of Phil 1: 21 "for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"

How do you know what you are glorifying? HERE ARE SOME ideas:

Look at what you get excited about. Look at where you quickly give your money and time. What do you give yourself to, just like that?

What do you easily spend your money on? What do you easily give your time to, your emotions to, your heart to, your conversation to?

We glorify that which we think is our worth, our importance. Sports, money, children, possessions, career, approval, looks, dream home, dream car?

KIDS, YOUTH, DO you know why your parents spend 'so much' time "bringing God into' everything? BECAUSE HE IS IMPORTANT and we are to do everything for HIS GLORY.

⇒ What is there in your life that when all is well with it, then all is well with you? When it is touched then your foundation is shaken. That is your functional glory, your functional God.

- If you think nothing of spending 3 hours watching a ball game, but would be uncomfortable or even bored spending 1 hour in a prayer meeting, what are you glorifying?
- If we spend time, money and emotional energy in preparing our children for their sporting, cultural or academic pursuits without a context of an eternal perspective, what are we glorifying?

How do we know that our hearts are alive with the Christ of Christmas and that we're no longer trying to steal glory from other things, i.e. a Herod?.

- ◆ **TO be alive with Christmas means saying <<I won't simply live for a nice comfortable little life>> .....reaching my financial goals, keeping my youthful appearance and figure past 50, having my dream home and a quiet retirement with my family always around me.>>** You can't look at Christmas and ever want to live for that anymore. Herod was living for the here and now. He was angry because his kingdom and agenda were threatened. Christmas means giving up our kingdom so we can SEEK God's KINGDOM. The Shepherds rejoiced at the coming of the King.
- ◆ **THE Christian aflame with Christmas says, << Lord, give me a great thing or a small things to do and I'll give up everything to do it.** I want to live in a way that can only be explained by the Holy Spirit whether I'm reaching the lost at home or abroad or changing diapers, grading papers, working the night shift or leading a bible study.>>  
This is the opposite of the cozy postcards and images. A Christian says, << look at what Jesus did for me. I expect my life to be different. I want my life to count for eternity. >>  
Is this what Christmas means to you?

#### HOW DO YOU GET A SHEPHERDS HEART?

We need to understand the message of Christmas, which is the gospel. Ask God to give you a receptive heart.

The Shepherds left glorifying and praising God because they were gripped with the transforming truth of the gospel: God SAVES SINNERS.

In Christ, God meets our biggest need.

When we know this, it becomes a fountain of joy for our hearts. When the gospel becomes radio active in our hearts, then it releases a power of transforming joy and peace, because it is a power. Live out of it. Our inner responses: anger, worry, envy, division, defensiveness, bitterness, come because we don't live on the gospel but on something else.

The answer isn't << TRY HARDER >>.

**THE ANSWER IS TO HUNGER AND THIRST MORE FOR Christ and Come to Drink from HIM** – not from church, or other people, or religious obedience, but HIM.

**Daily Consider him as your righteousness and glory before God.**

Celebrate Christmas every day in your heart.