

# Advent 3

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Turn with me to Matthew chapter 2. We're considering this year what Christmas means to me, how the birth of Jesus impacts us personally as we see it through the eyes of real people in the Nativity story.
- Mary helped us see the life-changing reality of God's grace reaching down to us. Joseph helped us see how Jesus interrupts our lives and meets our biggest need.
- This morning, we have not merely an interruption, but an invasion. Kingdoms clash as the true King is born.
- That's what happens at Christmas. Notice as I read in Matthew 2, the markedly different responses to the arrival of the King, King Jesus.
- [ 1 : 1 3 ]     God gives us this historical account for our instruction that we might know Him and love Him and trust Him. So let's read it with that sense of expectation this morning.
- 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.
- Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him.
- [ 2 : 2 5 ]     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 worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
- And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but these words of our God will stand forever.
- Let's pray. Father, open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things in your word.
- Softener our hearts that they would not remain hardened, but may be molded to yours. Subdue our wills, King Jesus.

[ 3 : 39 ] We ask it in your name. Amen. The story that we just read is a story about kings.

Not perhaps the three kings that we usually sing about this time of year, but about Herod the king and Jesus the king.

And it gives us, in that sense, a unique view into seeing that Christmas means the true king invading our world.

Now, you may wonder, why when this baby is born, do people start talking about kings so much? I mean, is his father a king? Was he born with a crown on his head?

Like, where did the king stuff? No, neither of those things is where it comes from. But remember that when we talk about the Messiah coming into the world, the primary Old Testament understanding of this promised one, this person who will come, is that he would be a king.

[ 4 : 48 ] We just read it from one prophet, but many said it that way. He would be the anointed one. It's what the word Messiah means. The one in David's line who would rule justly.

Finally, a king who would really do it right. So it's the true king who's invading our world. With unrivaled supernatural power, you see already in this account, his star, it says, moves.

To announce his birth and point out his location, he owns stars. There's no other king like this one.

And as in any good story, when the king arrives, loyalties are exposed quickly. The true king will require complete allegiance, right?

Utter submission, wholehearted devotion, and so the presence of the king as he shows up demands a response from everyone else.

[ 5 : 55 ] We know what this looks like. Just think of the Lion King, right? When Simba comes back to Pride Rock to claim his rightful throne, Scar and his treachery is exposed.

And you're either with him or you're against him, right? You may picture the return of Aragorn to the throne of Gondor and the honor that the true king is due.

Perhaps you think of the response required in the Black Panther movie after rivals fight to the death over the waterfall for the kingship of Wakanda.

When one wins, it's either long live the king or flee for your life, right? It's one or the other. I want to show you a quick clip from one other movie where the kingship is at stake.

Robin Hood tells the story of King Richard who has left England. The king has departed and Richard's brother John has claimed the throne in his place and he does not appreciate those who are still loyal to King Richard.

[ 7 : 07 ] He's rounding up and eliminating loyalists, including Robin Hood. The traitors to the crown must die. Traitors to the crown.

That crown belongs to King Richard. Long live King Richard. Long live King Richard. Enough! I am king! King! King!

Ah! Off with his hand! I showed you that clip primarily for that one memorable response from would-be King John.

I am king! King! I am king! King! King! King! King! King! King! King! King! King! King! King! King!  
Sounds a lot like Herod's response to the presence of another king.

More importantly for us this morning, it sounds a lot like our response to the presence of another king.

[ 8 : 0 9 ] I am king! King! King! King! King! King! King! I want you to remember that. We are going to talk about our own hearts more later.

But just consider briefly how our hearts resist being moved off the throne. At the age of three, that cry may sound like, It's mine!

Mine! At 13, it may sound like a passionate, That is so unfair! At 33, it may sound like a reasoned, Well, I've got to do what's best for me.

But at every stage, While we sound different, We like to be in control. To maintain our own comfort. To be the one in charge of ourselves.

To be the king, king, king, With no rival. Don't we? So did Herod. We know from even secular histories, That Herod was a ruthless, And very defensive king.

[ 9 : 23 ] He even had his wife, And three of his sons murdered, When he sensed a threat to his rule. Herod would do anything, To keep power.

He sought to sideline or eliminate, Anyone who threatened his control, And his comfort, Even, And especially, Jesus.

Herod had ruled on behalf of Rome, Over the Jews, For 30 years or so, At the time the Magi, Show up in this story. Notice how Matthew makes sure, That you see the awkward tension, That's here in this passage, And what it's really about.

Verse 1, In the days of Herod the king. And then verse 3, When Herod the king heard this, Wouldn't Herod have sufficed, The second time?

It's to Herod the king, That the Magi asked the question, In verse 2, Walking up to the king, Where is he who has been born, The king of the Jews?

[ 10 : 36 ] You sense the tension there? You don't ask that to the king. Herod is troubled, At the very thought, That the king has been born, And it's not him.

He's vulnerable, He's afraid, Enraged, We find out. And all of Jerusalem, With him, We're told. Not just the one king, But all those in the central city, Wielders of religious and political power, They seem to be unnerved, At the thought of something, Upsetting the system.

Of their control being taken. It's interesting, None of those who, Gather to tell Herod, Where the Messiah will be born, Are recorded as, Going to find him, To worship him.

I mean, This was supposed to be something, They were all planning for, Longing for, But this was a good thing, Right? But Herod, In particular, Understands, What kingship means.

If he is king, I am not. I am not. And the coming of the Messiah, The birth of the anointed one, In a way clearer than at any other time, Means the true king is here.

[ 11 : 54 ] Everyone has to respond to that. Herod's response, His decision is, War. Taking up his sword, In a desperate fight, Trying to use his power, To maintain his power, Herod seeks to find, This newborn king, In order to kill him, Doesn't he?

When he slips through his hands, At the end of this passage we read, We find out later, In the chapter, That Herod orders, His young boys killed, Likely dozens, Of boys under the age of two, In an effort to get, The one.

He lies, He abuses power, Anything it will take, And his sin, As with all sin, Is irrational.

Have you ever wondered, What Herod thought he would accomplish, In this? What dots was he connecting? I mean, If the Jewish prophets, Are not to be believed, And Yahweh is no true God, Then, Why bother?

Why be worried, About these prophecies, Of a king? On the other hand, If, If he is the true God, And the prophets are right, About a promised king, Then, Herod is picking, The wrong fight.

[ 13 : 14 ] Is he so prideful, That he thinks, He could outfox, Or overpower, Such a sovereign God, At work for centuries, To send this king, To send this king, Either way, It doesn't make, Any sense, Does it?

But, Herod takes, Option one, When the true king, Shows up, He wages, War, Against him, To resist, The true king, To eliminate him, From his life, So that he can maintain, His control, And comfort, There's another option, In this passage, When the true king arrives, And it's pictured, By the magi, They, Worship, The king, Look at the contrast, Matthew makes, With, With Herod, As he describes them, They're, They're searching, For this newborn king, Genuinely, In order, To drop, Their swords, And kneel, Before him, In worship, Journeying, In fact, Likely, For several months, And hundreds, Of miles, To find him, That's, Why of course, To make sure, We're being accurate, This morning, We're not in a manger, In Bethlehem, With three kings, But rather, A year or so later,

Probably, At a home, With likely, An entourage, Of travelers, If you're going to go, That far, Who bring, Three gifts, Which is, Why we sing, About three kings, Sometimes, But they are magi, They're wise men, Of some kind, Probably from a Persian, Court, Those who would have, Served and advised, Kings, But these wise men, With limited knowledge, Apparently, Of Hebrew scriptures, Journey, To worship, The king, Of the Jews, It's no exaggeration, To say, That they have, Shaped their lives, Around, This king, Investing, Considerable time, Expense, And effort, Just to find him, So, It should be, No surprise, That, That their joy, Is instantaneous, And overwhelming, When they, Find Jesus,

Verse 10, They rejoiced, Exceedingly, With great joy, You get the idea, They're happy, They're excited, They're, In fact, Overcome, With emotion, The words are telling us, And they're delighted, To worship, This king, That remarkable response, Is why, Almost every artist, For hundreds of years, Painted, His own version, Of the adoration, Of the magi, They bow, Before this king, They offer him gifts, Right?

Gold, Frankincense, And myrrh, The types of gifts, They would have offered, A king, Certainly the best, And finest gifts, They had to offer, That their court, Would have known, For anyone, And then verse 12, Being warned, In a dream, Not to return, To her, To her, To her, To her, To her, To her, They departed, To their own country, By another way, Maybe that fact, Seems old hat to you now, Since you've heard, The Christmas story, Before, But do you notice, How their loyalty, Has changed, Already?

[ 16 : 37 ] Just like that? Herod, The king, Of this whole region, The one they, Came looking for answers to, Has told them, To come back, And report to him, But when the true king, Arrives, They immediately, Obey his directives, Instead, Their lives, Continue to be shaped, Around this new king, Wholehearted worship, Not just with their lips, But with their lives, Their hearts, Their treasures, They eagerly, Submit their emotions, Their wills, Themselves, To this young, Child king, Indeed, The prophets, Seem to be right already, The nations, The Gentiles, Shall come, To your light, And it's happening, Right as he's born, What a king, Two contrasting, Responses, To his arrival, Laid out for us here,

War, Or worship, Taking up the sword, Or, Or laying down the sword, And the question, Of course, Is how do we, Respond, To king Jesus, To king Jesus, It's a pretty simple, Message, Nice Christmas message, Any nice pastor, Would say, So, Let's all respond, By worshiping Jesus, Stand together, And sing, And we'll be through, I'd like to do, Some application, First, That's what we usually call, This part, Of the sermon, But, We might as well, Skip to calling it, Meddling today, That's alright with you, Or, Or better yet, Perhaps, Let's just be honest, And say, This is invading, It's what Jesus is doing, I'll be honest with you, That I have hated, The rest of this sermon, All week, So you can join in now, Unless you've gotten, Really good, At hearing God's word,

And walking away, Unchanged, See, I'm just fine, At seeing this, Contrast, Herod versus the Magi, And realizing, Yeah, I choose to worship Jesus, That's my response, I'm fine with that, What I don't appreciate, Is being exposed, As more like, Herod and Jerusalem, With him, Many days, Than I am like, The Magi, The truth is, We don't do, Kings, Well, Period, And this, Baby, That we, Rejoice in, At Christmas, This, Newborn king, Is, Is not just another king, It's the true king, He is the king, Of kings, You can't, Worship this king, And call, Your body, Your money, Your retirement, Your home, Your kids, Or your time, Your own, Anymore,

They're his, Everything is his, For his kingdom, He's the king, How's that for a beachhead, Of the invasion, It's all his, Y'all, Sometimes without even realizing it, We can sideline, Or eliminate, Jesus, From any area of our lives, Where he might threaten our control, Or comfort, I control, I control myself, I define myself, I provide for myself, It's almost the air we breathe, These days, Individual autonomy, Self rule, I am king, King, King, We may laugh at that, But we must not settle for that, That's in our hearts, If you think an invasion of privacy is uncomfortable,

Try an invasion of autonomy, That's what King Jesus is, He says he's king, So you're not, How, How about in what your heart worships, Did you know being Presbyterians, Not an excuse for lacking emotion in your heart, Toward the God who loves you passionately, And pursues you sacrificially, If you're not deeply joyful, In the arrival of Jesus, Into this world for you, Into your world, And your life, It may be because you're content, With life under your own rule, It's pretty good, We've been singing this morning, About Jesus being a king, In case you didn't notice, Notice how it's in so many, Of our Christmas carols, Glory to the newborn king, Born a child and yet a king, Let earth receive her king, This, this is Christ the king,

[ 21 : 46 ] And I could keep going, But is lip service, Outward, Nominal worship, Where it stops for you?

Herod has some respect for the Bible, Doesn't he? He wants to know, Where it tells him to look for the king, Seems to think it has something worth listening to, But he thinks, Even as he looks there, That he can maintain his own control, And authority, Even while outwardly respecting gods, He sings Christmas songs about Jesus, If you will, But he avoids true worship at all costs, Are you content with an occasional, Religious formalism, A weekly, Or monthly, Worship experience, Or does the king have your whole heart?

Has his spirit warmed your heart, For the first time, Maybe recently, Or again, After many years of coldness, With the joy of your salvation, The glory of your savior king, Coming for you, What about giving?

Because no meddling, Or invading sermon, Would be complete without that, Right? Perhaps more because it's in our text, This morning, The magi, Give gifts, To this king, While Herod tries only to, To keep for himself, And take life, From others, Some of us give 10% every month, And move on thinking, We've done our duty, And we can spend our money, On our homes, Our kids activities, Our vacations, Whatever we want, With no thought at all, To what Jesus thinks about it, True?

Y'all, Jesus, Is the king, The king, This passage reminds us, That if he is the true king, He owns it all, He's not merely interested, In whether you use 10% for him, But truly 100% for him, And for his kingdom, And not merely money, But the best of all of the gifts, That you give naturally, In so many aspects of your life, Gold, Frankincense, And myrrh for you, May be your precious weekend time, Your professional skills, Your passion for kids, Whatever those gifts are, How can you use, The best you have, For King Jesus?

[ 24 : 31 ] See, Even those, First two categories, Are pointing to something much deeper, To a whole life, Shaped, Around the king, While Herod works to protect himself, And his control, From the king, To keep the king, As far away as he can, The magi are having their, Their entire lives, Reoriented around this, True king, Most of us have, Unbelieving friends, Who have told us, At some point in time, That one of the scariest things, About Jesus, As they consider, The claims of Christ, Is that if what he claims, Is true, He can ask anything, Of me, Someone said that, To you before?

That's right, Isn't it? And that's scary, Not just for, Folks considering, Following Jesus, It's scary for followers, Of him too, Isn't it? How else do you and I, Keep Jesus, Sidelined, In other areas, Of our lives?

Watch out, Invasion, Coming, Every time we choose to sin, We pick up, The sword, And decide, We want, Back on the throne, I'd be a better king, Of my life, Than Jesus, Irrational, Like Herod, But all sins are, We ignore the king, And indulge our anger, At our kids, Our friends, At a level that says, If I don't regain control, I'm not safe, We hear the promise, Of eternal pleasures, At the right hand, Of the king, And decide to indulge, Our lusts, To click it again, To meet him, Or her again, To watch it again, As though only we know, How to make sure,

We are happy, We ignore the king, And work longer hours, Avoid rest, And neglect people, As if there's no one, Providing for me, Or protecting me, So I better do it myself, You see how it's not just, The control freaks, Who are in our, Socially acceptable ways, Saying, I'm the king, King, King, King, King, King, King, King, King, King, King, There's only, One king, And I'm not him, And neither are you, But we run around, Even violently, Like Herod, Harming others, To keep ourselves, On the throne, We stress ourselves, And our kids, Over things we can't control, Anyway, And pressures to perform, That even God doesn't carry, For them or us, We run down,

Our co-workers, Our spouses, Our friends, In order to prop ourselves up, And feel important, We manipulate others, To get our way, At a rate that would, Lead you to believe, We won't survive, If things don't go, According to our plans, Y'all, In these, And in so many, Other ways, We too, Seek to sideline, Or eliminate, Jesus, From our daily lives, Maybe not for an hour, On Sunday, But, But all the other ones, And Jesus, Invades, This morning, And says, Get off, The throne, Put down, Put down, Put down, Your sword, You see now, What it means, When we sing, Joy to the world, The Lord is come, Let earth receive her king, Let every heart, Prepare him, Room, It's, It's a little harder, Than you might think, Let every heart,

[ 28 : 42 ] Prepare him, Room, Let me give you, A picture, Of what needs to happen, For my heart, To prepare room, For the true king, In our queen sized bed, We can prepare room, For a six year old, Who's having bad dreams, In the middle of the night, By just rolling over, A little bit, And squeezing her in, And trying to go back, To sleep, And not be bothered, By her, And pretend she's not there, For the rest of the night, Works pretty well, However, If, If one of her sisters, Shows up later, Then the only option, To prepare room for her, Involves me, Getting out of the bed, And going into her bed, To sleep for the rest of the night, And saying, This spot that I used to claim, As mine, Is now yours, See the difference, Between those two ways, To prepare room, My heart,

Would prefer, To roll over a little bit, And squeeze Jesus in, Alongside me, In my life, So that I can, Stay on the throne, And he can be important too, Whenever it doesn't bother me, But preparing Jesus' room, Is the other, Picture really, It means, It means, Real repentance, Real stepping down, Off the throne, Real turning, In trust, And submission, And wholehearted worship, And obedience to him, That real repentance, Can start today, By the way, With, With what you're feeling, In your heart, A longing, For him to take charge, And be your king, And praying, Begging him, To subdue you to himself, Just, Just ask him, Just be honest, God, Even in the places, I still really don't want you, To be king, Would you please come, And rule, Over me, See the truth is,

That the king, Has come, The question, Is how you'll respond, Whether you'll, Get out, And give him the spot, That you used to claim, Or, Since you're already here, In a church, Whether all you want to do, Is just roll over a little bit, And squeeze him in, And hope he doesn't, Keep you up at night, Or bother you, Anymore, Christmas, Is an invasion, Of my, Autonomy, I'd even take the interruption, From last week, Back, When we start talking, About that, But listen, It's an invasion, Of my autonomy, For my good, This king, Reigns in our lives, Unlike, Any other king, Doesn't he?

Subduing us to himself, Ruling and defending us, Restraining and conquering, All his, And our enemies, How? How does he do that? With a sword?

By laying down, His own, Life, No other king, Does that, Herod takes lives, To defend himself, But Jesus, Lays down, His own life, On the cross, To defend us, Right there, Underneath the sign, That reads, King of the Jews, He lays down, His life, He lays down, His life, He lays down, His life, Prophet, Tell us, Will there, Will there be another king, Like this?

[ 32 : 33 ] He'll bear no, Beauty or glory, Rejected, Despised, A man of such sorrow, Will cover our eyes, He'll take up our sickness, Carry our tears, For his people, He will be pierced, He'll be crushed, For our evils, Our punishment, Feel, By his wounds, We will be healed, From you, O Bethlehem, Small among Judah, A ruler, Will come, Ancient, And strong, The true king, Unlike any other, Has come, To rule you, Completely, And, Graciously, Won't you lay down your sword, And bow, Before King Jesus, And, And offer yourself, And all that you are, And have, To him, Let's pray, Jesus, We know, No other king,

Like this, And we confess, That we need a king, And we don't like it, But when there is no king, We do whatever is right, In our own eyes, And that is really dangerous, For us, We confess, That you know better, You love us, Better, You have loved us, Fully, In giving yourself, For us, And so we worship you, We lift your name up, And we ask, That you would so work, In our hearts, That that wouldn't just happen, Now in a moment, In an hour of worship, But, But that you would make that, In every moment, Of everyday, Reality, Subdue us, To yourself, And give us joy, In a king, Who loves us, And lays down his life for us,

That delight us, This Christmas, Invasions are not comfortable, But would what you accomplished, When you invaded this world, Give us eternal joy, And great cause, For celebration, We ask in Jesus name, Amen.

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