

Advent 3

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[0 : 00] 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 : 13] 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 : 25] 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.

Soften 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.

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, 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

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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