



Part 4: Herod

Matthew 2:1-15

How you respond to the loss of control in your life reveals who is truly your king.

Who is your King?

- If we are honest with ourselves, there is something in us that wants to be kings and queens of the mountain. It is the echoes from the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to be like God – to be in control. And I believe we have not fallen too far from that tree. So, this morning, I would like to ask the question, “Who is our king?” And I would like to frame this question with this thought: how you respond to the loss of control in your life reveals who is truly your king.

History Lesson

- In the Ancient Near East, Herod the Great, under Roman rule, was King in Judea from 37 B.C. to 4 A.D. He had eleven fortresses, including Herodium and Masada. He also built the beautiful and luxurious deep-water port of Caesarea, including a hippodrome for chariot races and an amphitheater honoring Caesar Augustus.
- Herod was racially Arab, religiously Jewish, culturally Greek, politically Roman, and ruthlessly arrogant. Caesar Augustus once said, “I would prefer to be Herod’s pig than his son.”

Matthew 2:1-15

- The magi coming to Herod in Jerusalem asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him (Matthew 2:2).” This was deeply ironic and threatening to Herod’s reign and sense of kingship.
- In this king of the mountain battle, everything seemed stacked against Jesus. Herod was the obvious winner. He had the strength, the power, and the control. How could Jesus be the Messiah? God does something pretty crazy and totally unexpected in coming as a baby. He

doesn't play by the rules; he changes the rules in which this broken world lives by. Instead of the strongest and fastest, smartest and richest, the survival-of-the-fittest, God came as a helpless baby.

- Jesus is the true King. There is a shift in the text. Herod is mentioned as "King Herod" twice, in Matthew 2:1 and 3. After the prophecy of Jesus' birth from Micah 5:2, he is only referred to as Herod seven times. This shift is significant as it implies in the story who is the real king. And yet, sadly, Herod rejects the true King; he rejects the light.

Who is your King?

Questions:

- During this pandemic, have you been grasping for control or trusting God?
- How did you respond when the stock market crashed in March?
- How did you respond when we went to a "safer-at-home" order and had to wear a mask everywhere?
- How did you respond when a friend or a relative contracted COVID? Or maybe even yourself?
- How did you respond when there was much racial unrest?
- How did you respond when there was tense political strife and uncertainty? Or maybe when "your guy" did not win?

For how we respond to the loss of control in our life reveals who is truly our king.

"Herod is not dead; Herod lives on, in us ... the exaggerated ambitions, pretensions, greed for position, grudge against God, guile and finally human cruelty and insensitivity, which are all the fruit of our war with God – all these live still in us and must be contended with until the last judgement." Frederick Bruner, *Christbook*

Controlling God

- One might think, "I don't try to control God." But implicitly, we often do. In our heads and our hearts, we think, "If I do this, God will do that. And if God is not doing His part, I must not be doing my part; going to church, reading the Bible, praying, giving, being good" ... fill in the blank.
- We have a greater sense of control when we can reduce our relationship with God to a simple formula – we can be kings and queens of our lives.

So, who is your king?

- The childhood game of 'King of the Mountain' does not end in our childhood. We strive to reach the top of the mountain, to be strong and in control, we strive to be king of the mountain.
- Herod, like many of the "kings of the mountains" of this world, often die empty and in misery.

- It is actually a good thing to lose control and be reminded of the illusion of control (Romans 8:20-21). Our sense of control is merely an illusion that leaves us in bondage to decay.
- But when Jesus is our King, we live and play by different rules. It is no longer the vicious pursuit and posturing of our strength and control, but it is all about Him and His pursuit for us.

“Jesus came to decimate our self-oriented kingdoms of one so that he could welcome us to his glorious kingdom of wisdom, grace, and love. Grace destroys so that it can rescue. Grace destroys so that it can bless us with something much, much better. Grace destroys what has held us in bondage and frees us to live, love, and serve One greater than ourselves. Jesus came to endure a violent death so that in the violence of grace he could free us from the kingdom of self and transport us to his kingdom of life and light that will never ever end.” Paul David Tripp

- In this dark and broken world, Jesus is the King of the mountain, but His mountain is called calvary. A mountain where He laid down His life so that we can have life.

Sermon Discussion Questions

Did you ever play ‘King of the Mountain’ when you were a kid? How in your life are you still playing ‘King of the Mountain’?

To the list of questions, how did you respond? Were you grasping for control or trusting God?

What area in your life do you need to release control and receive God’s control and reign?