



UNTO US

God For Us
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
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OPENING

Join us today as we look at all that God did through the birth of His Son, Jesus, to radically change and redeem our story. God gave us a whole new way to live, to love, and have a relationship with Him and others -- all through the birth of a little baby, born in a forgotten town, to a teenage mother. Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, The prophet Isaiah tells the good news that God is coming to Earth to save them. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) This series tells the story of God's efforts through the ages to come close to His people, to teach them His ways and to live among them.

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 2:1-16 "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him.' When Herod heard this he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' (Micah 5:2) Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.' After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up and take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.' So he got up and took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so it was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.' (Hosea 11:1) When Herod realized he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi."

Romans 5:6-8 "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us."

Romans 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship."

¹ All scripture listed is NIV unless otherwise indicated



OBSERVATION

When the people heard Isaiah's prophesy, they thought He would bring the overthrow of Roman oppression, but this King would rule with wisdom and power in an everlasting kingdom. Today, we are coming out of one of the most difficult political seasons of our own lives and moving toward a peaceful transition of power. In Jesus' time this transition came with bloodshed. Herod the Great was obsessed with keeping his power and was paranoid about everyone around him. When the Magi, Persian kings who were predictors of future kings, said they were looking for the child who would be king of the Jews, Herod was rightfully disturbed and ordered all baby boys under the age of two to be murdered. While Herod was protecting his position of power, the King of Kings was lying in a manger nearby.

Question: The Magi brought three gifts to the King of Kings: Gold, frankincense and myrrh. What did these three gifts represent? What gifts are you presenting to Him?

APPLICATION

Saul, after Jesus' resurrection, tried to stamp out Jesus' followers. He, like Herod, was so threatened by loss of power that he tried to crush Christians, until he had an encounter with Jesus. He reflected a bigger story of kings trying to hold onto their power through hundreds of years before Jesus' birth.

Question: Is there a little bit of Herod in you? How do you protect the position of power in your life?

St. Paul says, sixty years after Jesus' birth, that, at just the right time, while they were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. He came to rescue us while we were still sinners. The Baby who came to be WITH us, became the Man who DIED for us.

Question: When did you realize that you needed a Savior? Describe that experience?

Some people are still skeptical about Jesus. They haven't answered the question: Is Jesus your King? They want enough of Him to stay out of Hell and just enough of Him to get into Heaven, but not enough to change their lifestyle.

Question: How much of a skeptic are you? What in the previous statement describes you?

We need to decide what we are going to do with Jesus. In Herod's time, the people were forced to make a choice. There was no fence-sitting allowed. Either you were for Herod or you were for Jesus. One was holding onto power and the other was laying down His life voluntarily and giving up His power.

Question: Ten of the twelve Apostles died horrific deaths, too, for their faith, and they are asking you: Are you willing to give your life for Him? What would keep you from doing so?

Question: When the final chapter is written, what will be your story in relationship to Jesus?

Surrendering our lives doesn't come naturally to us. Today we can resist Him or worship Him. Worship is the pursuit of someone who causes us awe; at its core is the acknowledgement of who Jesus is and the surrendering of our lives is how we honor Him.

Question: If you have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas, how do you plan to re-engage this year?

Question: What opportunities for worship are you planning?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we are still protecting little pockets of power in our lives. Help us to surrender them wholly to You and commit our bodies, as living sacrifices, to ministries which will honor You. St. Paul considered himself to be the worst among sinners, yet he was saved by Your grace and mercy, and so are we. We thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.