

8-30-20
Matthew 2
God's Plan for the World will not be Denied

As I thought about this morning's sermon I was drawn back to my days as a salesperson and the training I received.

I took a Dale Carnegie course, read John Maxwell's books. Studied articles on highly successful people. Made goals and did everything I could to be as successful as I could in my field. To say that I was driven during these times was an understatement. I went into all the details of the life I was striving for and what I achieved but I will tell you where I landed.

Proverbs 16:9, "The mind of man (or woman) plans their way, but the Lord directs their steps."

In all the planning, studying and striving for success as I viewed it, it all came to not because God had a different plan for my life. I just didn't know it and even when I had a inkling of what the direction He wanted me to go, I ran from it.

It really is true that if we are children of God, that when we make plans, God still orchestrates our steps to accomplish His kingdom purposes. He does this in individual's lives and He does this in big Kingdom movements on earth.

Such is the story we are going to look at today. The story of how Herod the King, unknowingly tried to thwart God's plan of salvation through the giving of His Son. Let's read through the story as found in Matthew 2.

The following scriptures are not in the outline but for the screen only.

Matthew 2:1-3, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.’”

7-9 “The Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.’ After hearing the king, they went their way...”

12-15, “And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

16-18, “The when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.’”

In this last verse we read, ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more.’”

Most scholars agree that the woman Rachel referred to here was the wife of Jacob who was renamed Israel. Jacob or Israel was Abraham’s grandson and it was through Israel that the nation of Israel was birthed.

When the Israelites were all taken captive in approximately 600 B.C., the nation of Israel was mourning their fate and the fact that most of them were taken away to foreign countries as slaves.

The thought was that Rachel was mourning the loss of her extended family, her children in a way.

The loss of a nation was traumatic. The example of Rachel would be like the United States being taken over by a foreign country and most of its people relocated throughout say Russia, and the founding fathers of America weeping over the loss.

The horror that took place after the birth of Jesus was, well, I couldn't find the right words. The murder of so many innocents because a ruler was insecure.

Most scholars estimate the population of Bethlehem in the days of Jesus being no more than 600. If this was the case then the number of young boys under the age of two was probably no more than 20 or less. I grew up thinking that Herod slaughtered 100s if not 1,000s. But based upon the population of Bethlehem it wouldn't have been that much.

Still, for God and for the twenty or so parents to have Roman soldiers show up to their home, pull their infant son out of the house and then kill him, well, it would have been terrific for sure.

Why did Herod do this? In verse three we are told that he was troubled when he heard the news from the magi that a king was born. I think the first thing that jumped into his mind was competition. Someone who might challenge his claim to the throne.

The second reason I think Herod did this was because he was a puppet of someone else. Who else on earth didn't want the Son of God to be born? Satan. Satan tried to eliminate Jesus shortly after He was born but God was onto him. He knew what Satan was going to try to do through Herod and God's plans will not be denied.

Time and time again you can read in the Bible about the stories of man's attack against God and the people of God. It seems like the people of the earth will never learn. God is in control and His plan for this earth and all those who have lived, are living and will live are subject to His plans. He will not be denied.

This is a good place for me to transition into the lesson from Psalms I shared last Wednesday night. Some of you might have seen it. If so, you are going to get double-dipped in this teaching. Some of you in Sunday School may even get triple dipped.

This Psalm could have been written for us today. You'll see what I mean in a moment. **Psalms 2:1-2. Why are the nations in a uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed...**"

This particular part of Psalm 2 was quoted by Peter in Acts 4:25-26. Peter and John were preaching outside the temple, healed a man and then they were arrested by the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. They threw Peter and John in jail and threatened them the next day not to preach Jesus anymore.

When Peter and John returned to the house where the rest of the apostles and disciples were they shared what happened and here is the response of the disciples and apostles there.

Acts 4:24-26, 'O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'Why did the gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.'"

You can see that what they said was almost a direct quote from Psalm 2.

Things don't change much do they. In David's day, in Jesus' day and in our day. Men will always be used by Satan to attack God and His people.

Look back with me at Psalm 2 to see what is going on.

1. The nations are in an uproar and the peoples are devising a vain thing

All throughout the land the nations around David, they had rejected God and were trying to do things their own way, through their own religions and it wasn't working. Chaos ensued. Violence broke out, wars occurred.

Don't we see this happening today in China, Libya, Iran, Russian and throughout Africa and other nations? There is never peace, the nations are in a constant state of uproar. The government of these nations try to run things in a very human way and then the people in these nations become oppressed by their own government. When the occurs, chaos is all that is left.

Think about what is happening in our nation today. I don't know how many true protesters there are today but they are not making the news as much as the rioters. Some of the possible good that could have come from the first demonstrations may have been lost or at least delayed. Time will tell.

Look again at verse 2 of Psalms 2. **“The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and His Anointed.”**

It is so easy for us to see this happening today. In some foreign countries like China, North Korea, Iran, Iraq and the Muslim countries, there is an outright attack against God and His people. My Bible capitalizes Anointed and I take this to mean Jesus.

That is what the disciples in **Acts 4:26**, “**The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.**”

We know these nations are not allowing the word of Jesus to be shared. They are doing everything they can do to keep the gospel from spreading. They are outlawing churches, Bibles and throwing people in jail or even worse.

Here in this country the attacks upon Christians and Christianity is not outright yet. We have seen some attacks against churches and people who are attending church. And I am sure there are those who purposely attack the church and Christ with evil intent. They are trying to undermine the church of Jesus Christ in various ways through laws and politics.

But there are a lot more attacks against Jesus and His church that are happening in a more subtle way.

Look at **Psalms 2:3**, “**Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!**”

Fetters is not a word we use today but it means restraints, ties, bonds. In essence what they are saying is we don't want to be under the govern or rule of God or of any institution that has been set up on godly standards.

- 2. People don't want to be under the govern or rule of God or of any institution that has been set up on godly standards. Could it be that our nation is in an uproar against God?**

There are some who are wanting to get rid of any type of authority. And what is sad is some of the authorities around the nation is allowing them to get away with it.

Part of verse 2 says the rulers take counsel together...They are not seeking the counsel of the Lord. They are trying to come up with solutions based upon human thinking. And verse 2 goes on to say, they take counsel together against the Lord.

Isn't it true that When rulers get together and take counsel from each other and not from God it never turns out well. Jesus said He who is not with Me is against Me. If you are not seeking your counsel from the Lord then you are limited to counsel from yourself or another human source.

In the Bible we read about Solomon's son Rehoboam. Rehoboam was not a very wise man. In 1 Kings 12 we are told that he had a issue of ruling the country that came up and this is the story of how he handled it.

1 Kings 12:6-7, "6Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. "How would you advise me to answer these people?" he asked. 7They replied, "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." 8But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him."

This young king rejected the advise of the elders and went with the advise of the young men he grew up with, men who didn't know or serve the living God. Do you know what happened? The nation of Israel split into two different countries then after a few years civil war occurred between Israel and the new nation of Judah.

Because the ruler took counsel together with others like him and not with God the nation broke apart, never to be the same.

O my, I could be writing about this nation couldn't I? I am not 100% sure where President Trump is personally but I do believe He values the principles of God this country was founded upon. I believe it is his heart for our country to remain faithful to those godly principles.

But there are those in different positions of government who want to disregard any teachings of God and of Jesus. Let us cast the cords of the 10 commandments away. Let us cast the cords of restraint away. Let us each do what we feel is right in our own eyes.

3. We are living in a spiritually dangerous time

But God's not done. Look at verse 4-5 of Psalms 2.

Psalms 2:4-5, "He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury."

The nations are in an uproar. The kings, the leaders of nations take counsel among themselves with no regard to the Lord God. God sets back as He watches their folly and He laughs and scoffs at them.

A unique demonstration of God's emotions isn't it. But God also says that He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury. This is what we should fear. If God decides to speak to this nation in His anger and fury. If He does and maybe He has already spoke to this nation, this is what I think will happen. Look with me at Romans

Romans 1:18-19, 21, 28-32.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Verse 28-32, “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

Wow, let that sink in for a moment.

This is the wrath of God so far. You wonder why some of the people are doing the things they are doing? You wonder why some of the people in positions of leadership are promoting the things they are? God gives those who want nothing to do with Him over to a depraved mind. Their foolish hearts become darkened.

In other words God says to them, you want to tear away from Me, you want to cast your cords that connected you to My protection, My guidance, My love and My forgiveness, well...here you go. You want it, you got it.

This is where I see our country going today. We are on very, very dangerous ground.

I pray for our country. I see the changes happening in our country and it is coming from some of the people and some of the leaders of our country. Leaders and the people who have put the leaders in place who have taken counsel against the Lord and His ways.

And the result is not good. It is chaos.

God help us. And He will if we seek Him.

There is hope. I don't want to leave us on such a down note. There is hope.

4. With God there is always hope of a person or a nation being restored

God made a promise to Solomon and the nation of Israel and I believe it is a promise that we can grab ahold of for ourselves.

2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven. And I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

We are the hope of the United States. We are the people who are called by His name, Christians. It is by us, God's people, that when we begin humbling ourselves by turning away from always going our own way, seeking our own counsel or the counsel of those not following the Lord and we begin seeking God in earnest, coming before Him in prayer, seeking His ways, and His forgiveness. It is then a healing in the land will begin.

I believe here in Wiggins we have a lot to celebrate. I believe through us, through you, the church of Jesus Christ, God is using you to spread and build His kingdom. But as a nation, I fear we are losing ground.

The truth of God is His plan will not be denied. The Herods of this world or even the turning of nation away from Him will not hindered His plan for His Son to rule the earth.

But for us, let's do our part. Join me know as we lift up this prayer together for us and for our nation.

Join me as we do that now.