**To Destroy Him**

**Matthew 2:13-23**

*2nd Sunday after Christmas*

*01.03.2021*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

You may be thinking that thankfully we do not have to hear this Scripture lesson every year. And while I cannot speak for you, this text raises a question I know that I share with at least a few others, “Who would want to destroy a baby?”

The answer of course is scary. Babies are often seen in our world as an inconvenience, and as long as they have not broken forth from the womb, way too many are destroyed. Abortion is no less scary and just as evil as what we hear in our text. Why does it bother us so little?

As for the Child in our text who Herod wanted to destroy, well, that was to be Jesus’ lot in life. How many wanted to destroy him? From Herod at His birth, to the Jewish leadership which ultimately accomplished that same goal some thirty years later and then jeered at Him beneath the cross upon which He final breathed His last – there were many who wanted to destroy Him.

From the time of His conception, Satan was using people to try and destroy the Babe whose birth we celebrated a bit over a week ago. Satan almost convinced Joseph to abandon Mary. A few months later though, he convinced Herod to commit mass murder to destroy this one Child.

Why is this you wonder? Why is Satan out to destroy Jesus? Jesus is God’s Son. Even in diapers and unable to express His hunger or thirst with more than tears and crying, He is God in human flesh. He is come to save people from Satan’s domain, and Satan wants nothing of it.

But, if we consider things carefully, should we have expected anything less? As Simeon blessed Jesus in the temple last week, he also said that He would be opposed and informed Mary that her own heart would be pierced by His attempted destruction.

After Jesus was baptized and went out into the world to minister to the people, He took disciples under His wing. Jesus informed His disciples that people were out to destroy Him. He also explained to them that they would also try to destroy His disciples – of every age.

It is possible that you are thinking, “that’s all well and good pastor, but we know what happened – we know the whole story. Yes, they crucified Jesus, but three days later He rose from the dead. So no, they did not destroy Him at all. He reigns victorious and will judge the living and the dead.”

If those are your thoughts, you are exactly correct. If those are not your thought, start thinking them. But do not stop there.

Dearly beloved of God, the goal is still to destroy Him. The question remains as valid today as it would have been to be asked some two thousand ten years ago, “How many want to destroy Jesus?”

Our contemporary culture would love nothing better than to destroy Jesus. You have probably complained that He has virtually been completely driven out of our school systems. You know how His name is forbidden in many conversations. At the same time, the names of other gods from numerous false religions are gratefully welcomed.

To be fair, there are those who do this willingly. Others however know not what they do. How many conversations have you had where a defense of your faith or a defense of the teaching of Christianity was called for – but you remained silent?

Those who buy into evolution often do not even understand that they are trying to destroy Jesus. By insisting that mankind is only another small developmental step up from lower forms of animal life, evolutionism is attempting to eliminate the reality of sin – and therefore the need for a Savior. Satan is attempting to destroy Christ, and necessary place for Christ in the life of all sinners – evolution has been Satan’s tool for a long time.

Let us not stop there. Consider this, it is amazing how people try to destroy Christ even in the Church which bears His name.

Preachers tell people how to improve themselves and their own lives, look what Jesus taught and how He lived. In so doing, Christ, as our Redeemer and Savior from sin is destroyed. How? people are taught to look at Jesus as nothing more than a teacher and a model for Christian life we are to follow. While we are indeed to love others, just as God in Christ Jesus has loved us, those who follow such teachings and think they have accomplished much in their salvation are confused. Even worse, the reality is that they have destroyed Christ. They believe that they have no need of Him other than to show them the way to be Christ-like. Jesus does His part, they take care of the rest.

How many in our own churches attempt to destroy Christ? Some do so by throwing out the Law, making sin nothing serious whatsoever – they therefore do not truly need a Savior. Some make the Law something attainable – Jesus did His thing, now you and I need to do our part. In either of these scenarios, Christ, the Savior from sin, has been destroyed.

Still others attempt to destroy Christ by denying His own word. They come to the sacrament falsely believing that what they are eating and drinking is only a symbol or a representation of Christ’s body and blood. In their belief, or should we more honestly call it what it is, in their unbelief, they sin against the very body and blood of Christ. In their eating and drinking, they are taking that which Christ would give to them for their salutary good and receiving it to their judgment. This is exactly what Paul explains of it in his first letter to the Corinthians. In so doing, they destroy Christ.

To take this to the appropriate conclusion, when we continue to sin, after being forgiven and knowing full well the cost of our forgiveness, we are also attempting to destroy Christ. When you and I continue in sinfulness, fully knowing that it is sin and the cost of forgiveness, it is a callous disregard for the love of God which is Christ Jesus.

Dearly beloved of God, all those who do these things often do not realize their sin. You and I do not see these things as attempts to destroy Christ, but that is exactly what they are.

God’s Son took on human flesh, He was born of a virgin, for a purpose. Jesus is the Christ! Jesus is the One who came in our flesh to save His people from their sins.

When we continue in sin…

when we do not believe Him at His word…

when we think that our sins are insignificant, or are not sins…

when we believe that we somehow contribute to our salvation – whether we know it or not – we are destroying everything that Christ accomplished.

It pleased the Father to give His only begotten Son, to protect Him from Herod, to keep Him safe until the fullness of time had come. It was then, at the right time that Christ died for us, the sinless for the sinful.

In His death, Jesus was not destroyed, but destroyed sin and death for us with His own flesh upon the cross. He rose to boldly proclaim the victory, your victory over sin accomplished.

Thankfully, Christ has not been destroyed – by Herod, by the Jewish High Council, by you, or by me. In fact, Christ destroys sin and death in you and me today. Despite our best efforts, Christ comes to us again with forgiveness – it is what He does. No matter what we might think we need from Him, Christ comes to us and gives us what He, as True God, knows what we need most – He speaks to us forgiveness so that not a spot or blemish of sin remains.

Yes, Christ’s body and blood are indeed present, and in that precious and holy meal He feeds us forgiveness. He gives to us Himself, and in the process destroys sin in us. This holy food strengthens your faith to believe and trust that all you need is given to you in this meal.

God has destroyed that which would keep us from Him and given us forgiveness and life. Let us rejoice again that the Beloved Child was protected so He might destroy that which would bring us harm. Let us rejoice and give thanks that He still comes to bring us forgiveness and life. In Christ, we are saved from destruction unto life everlasting. In the name of Jesus. Amen.