

Matthew 2: “ 9 When [the Wise Men] heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. 13 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old & under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more."”

And from the passage in Jeremiah from which Matthew quoted...

Jeremiah 31:15 “Thus says Jehovah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, Refusing to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more." 16 Thus says Jehovah: "Refrain your voice from weeping, And your eyes from tears; For your work shall be rewarded, says Jehovah, And they shall come back from the land of the enemy.”

"America: Weeping for Her Children"

As we do each year here at Church of the King we are focusing on the sin of abortion in our nation as we approach the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion-on-demand. It is a subject that I have had to encounter my entire Christian walk! Linda and I were young Christians in the 1970's and I was not even saved in 1973, when Roe was decided. We spent a great deal of time in those early years studying the work of Dr. Francis Schaeffer and the ministry he & his wife Edith had at L'Bri in Switzerland.

- When they challenged a sleeping Church to engage in the battle to stop abortion-on-demand it had a great impact on our lives, leading us here to Sacramento to be involved on the political front in the early 1980's.
- So after more than 30 years I do know the issue well but always struggle with the proper way to remind us of the gravity of the situation: Some 57 million dead!

It was Joseph Stalin who said: “one death is a tragedy but a million deaths is just a statistic.”

For example, we tend to have great empathy for those mothers who lost their babies to Herod's cruelty which we saw in our morning text... But when we read the account of God destroying all of mankind in the flood there in the Book of Beginnings, it is more difficult to think about the details of the suffering that took place or the individual lives that were lost.

We certainly see this in our own nation when it comes to violence against children: Three years ago twenty young children died at the hands of a gunman at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut and the entire nation was rightly fixated on the loss of those lives.

President Obama even returned to that scene recently in an effort to push for more gun control and all the press made over the tears that he shed for those kindergarten students.

And yet yesterday, something approaching five thousand unborn babies were ripped from the security and safety of their mother's wombs by the sin of abortion at various abortion mills around the county, including those run by Planned Parenthood the nation's largest abortion provider... Has our President shed any tears for those children...? No! In fact, just days after his visit to Sandy Hook he vetoed the bill that would have taken the federal blood money away from Planned Parenthood!

- And accept for a few hundred sidewalk counselors out in front of all those abortion chambers, who cried or even took note?

Since the Roe decision in 1973, one third of our children have been lost and it is very appropriate to ask... Who is to blame and who is impacted?

- Certainly the abortionist who carries out the procedure.
- The women share the blame and carry the burden the rest of their lives.
- What about the father or the extended family?
- What about the judges & elected officials who made it legal?

However, if we know our Bibles well, we would see and know that it is God's people, the Church, who bear the ultimate responsibility in a nation that have covenanted with God!

- And it is the Church that must show the way back!
- We are facing a grave situation today and we need to understand that we will bear the responsibility as God's Covenant people.

We learn this from the Scriptural examples that God has given us if we have ears to hear and eyes to see. Our text tells of the wickedness of King Herod which we remember each year as part of the Christmas account...

- When word of the coming Messiah reached King Herod it troubled him and ALL of Jerusalem with him: And they tried to kill Jesus.
- And while certainly many parents around Bethlehem suffered as individuals on that dark night, we also see King Herod dying soon after and in seventy years all of Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Later, Jesus had His strongest words of condemnation of their rebellion for the Pharisees and Sadducees...

- But He also cried over all of Jerusalem as He made His triumphal entry into that city.

We see the principles of God's judgments clearly in the Old Testament with the reign of King Manasseh... The King held responsible for bringing the practice of child sacrifice to Jerusalem. [*explain Moloch*] They were more open with what they were doing, but the reasons were the same... Personal peace & affluence! [*mention letters to the Supreme Court*]

In II Chronicles we read that King Manasseh, "led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the people of Israel."

King Manasseh was judged individually: Captured and led off to Babylon where he repented and was restored, which gives us great hope!

- There is NO sin beyond the reach of God's grace: Even abortion!

However, we must remember that God's covenant people were also held responsible for these grave sins:

Many years later when it came time for the judgment of Judah, we read in II Kings 23:26 these chilling words: "Still Jehovah did not turn from the burning of His great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him."

➤ And when the armies of Babylon marched against King Jehoiakim we read in II Kings 24:

"2 And Jehovah sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of Jehovah which He had spoken by His servants the prophets. 3 Surely at the commandment of Jehovah this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which Jehovah would not pardon."

➤ So we see that the Lord judges both the leaders and the people: Both are under the blessings and curses of the Covenant [*Deuteronomy chapters 27 & 28 can be your homework.*]

We should also note how rapidly God's people can move from faithfulness to such depravity...

From the golden age of King Solomon to the Babylonian exile was less than four hundred years...

➤ About the time that has elapsed since the signing of the Mayflower Compact on the American continent!

So is all blackness & despair? Has the sin of abortion blotted out the hope of the Gospel in America?

➤ God forbid!

As we saw with the life of King Manasseh himself there is always a way back... And I want to suggest this morning that those who desire to be faithful in an unfaithful age should focus on three important things:

First we are to help those in need!

Proverbs 24 tells us at verse ten: "If you faint in the day of adversity, Your strength is small. 11 Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. 12 If you say, "Surely we did not know this," Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it?"

➤ We are not to hide our heads in the sand and we are not to fear being involved & even confrontational.

We see the application of these verses in the life of Jesus as He ministered to the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, and in His famous parable about the Good Samaritan.

This is why we support as a church the ministries that not only confront the sin of abortion in the public square, but those who give women a loving alternative and help those in need. This should extend to our individual lives as well: God will often bring those in need across your path and there are always opportunities to serve, which I will speak about in a moment.

➤ AGAIN, our covenant children will learn by our example.

In addition to providing practical help, **we must never fear to preach the Gospel!**

➤ This presentation of the Gospel in such times should include the praying of the imprecatory Psalms as we are doing this week as a congregation.

Our proper response to grave sin is to cry out for God's justice...

➤ Remembering it is God's responsibility to determine how that justice will be carried out, and NOT ours.

- When we understand this and truly believe that God does all things well, then we can have that peace that surpasses understanding we studied during Advent, even in the midst of such grave sin and the resulting consequences.

This is what we see in the life of Daniel and the other faithful Saints who endured the Babylonian captivity...

- The judgment that came upon the nation of Israel for their grave sins.

They could not bring themselves to sing the songs of Zion while Jerusalem lay in ruins but they knew that God would ultimately judge these wicked people, with even more wicked people! There are times where we struggle to understand how God works out His justice, just as Asaph did in Psalm 73 when he was troubled by the pride & prosperity of the wicked.

- A few years ago we looked at the Prophet Habakkuk as America's prophet because he was shocked when God explained how and why He planned to use the Babylonians to judge His covenant people.

When we realize all of this we begin to see that the Imprecatory prayers not only call down God's judgment but also give us peace as we remember Who is truly in control. When we studied the Book of Acts we saw how the early Church had two fierce enemies:

- Saul of Tarsus and King Herod!
- Both were persecuting and even killing the Saints so I am sure some of the very imprecatory prayers we are praying today as a congregation were lifted up against both men.

And in each case God answered those prayers by slaying the wicked...

Saul was slain before the Lord Jesus and resurrected as Paul the Apostle on the road to Damascus and the proud King Herod fell before lowly worms, dying a miserable death.

- BOTH ceased to be enemies of God's Church!

One went to hell & the other went on to serve the King of Kings.

- We should and must pray for such victories today!

And finally in addition to offering help to those in need & faithfully preaching the Gospel through imprecatory prayers...

The Bible gives us instructions about how we who are faithful should live when we face a time of great trouble. [And I will give you a hint: It is NOT wringing our hands & hoping for the rapture!]

We cannot know for sure what God will do with America in the future...

- But we know that the blood of those 57 million children cries out to Him from the ground as it did when Judah sacrificed His children to Moloch.

The Prophet Jeremiah gave those sent off to captivity in Babylon some basic commands on how they were to live in the new place God had put them and they apply in any tough times...

Jeremiah 29:4 "Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: [the exile was not a surprise to God nor a "plan B"]

- Build houses and dwell in them;
- Plant gardens and eat their fruit.
- Take wives & beget sons & daughters;
- And take wives for your sons & give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters--that you may be increased there & not diminished.

[and here is the really tough one for us]

- “And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive,
- And pray to Jehovah for it; for in its peace you will have peace.”

[Note: This is how & why we pray for our civil magistrates here each week, despite their abundant wickedness!]

- The Prophet goes on to show that this WAS God’s plan and that they were NOT to doubt that it was a good plan:

8 “For thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says Jehovah. 10 For thus says Jehovah: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. 11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says Jehovah, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, says Jehovah, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says Jehovah, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.”

The bottom-line is that we are to trust that God knows what He is doing...

- That sounds so simple, and yet since the time that Eve questioned God’s wisdom in the garden we have all fallen so short in that regard!

And the way we demonstrate that trust is to be faithful:

- Faithful in helping those in need
- Faithful in preaching the Gospel & lifting up our voices in prayer
- And faithfully living peaceful and productive lives.

Now hearing me say that we must live in peace and be confrontational and engaged with those in need might sound a bit contradictory... As with most of the Christian walk there is some tension and a need for wisdom: How are we to build homes and have children as we are commanded and still be engaged in the public square & to pray against the merchants of death and to help those being led away to slaughter?

- Well the easy one is to remember that we can all pray! And yet that is so easily forgotten.
- The next easy task is being faithful in our tithes and offerings so that the needs in our Body and those of others can be met. But we might have other priorities.
- And finally there is still a need to share our time and talents.

This last one can often require the most creative thinking and work because it is not as clear cut as spending a set time on our knees or bringing the tithe.

We have young men & women who on the one hand have a great deal of time and energy on their hands...

- Their first priority should be to build their field and to prepare for a future family.
- They must seek the Lord for the proper balance of preparing for the future and still helping today!

Young families are building those houses and having the children that God wanted in times of trouble, but we know that can easily require all the time and energy they have as young people and more.

And yet here too they must seek wisdom for the proper balance... Parents can look for “educational” opportunities that can include the children, like a trip to the state capitol or a rally that protests the killing. Where children simply cannot participate, then some coordination can help: Sidewalk counseling or volunteering at a CPC could be arranged if two or three families with young children coordinate their efforts so some watch the children while others volunteer their time.

And then we come to us older folks... We have much more time and money than we used to have, but also there can be increased responsibilities and of course there is that question of energy!

- We must press on & finish strong!

In all of these cases there are plenty of legitimate excuses we can lean on & we can also be distracted in so many ways:

- We must constantly be evaluating our priorities and challenging each other to do more!
- In a moment we will sing one of the great imprecatory prayers in the Bible, Psalm 83, and pray that our nation turn from the sin of abortion as we lift up the Great Prayer.
- Just before my message we read and sang Psalm 2, again calling our nation, and all the other nations of the earth to repentance:

Psalm 2 reminds us that the promise of life applies to nations as well as individuals, which is why we are commanded to disciple the nations:

- The Psalmist declares that God has given the nations of the earth to His Son:

8 “Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.” [Does anyone doubt that Jesus asked for all of them?] Then the Psalmist shows how the Son does the same with them as He did with Saul of Tarsus and King Herod: “9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' ””

Some nations will be utterly destroyed as the Kingdom of Jesus advances and others converted, both dashed to pieces from a human perspective!

- Finally there is a call for the nations to choose wisely: 10 “Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” 12 “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”
- Such is the prayer we lift up this morning for America...

And such should also be our prayer for each and every one of us here at Church of the King as well!

- May we be those who trust only in the Lord our helper!

Communion Meditation: Psalm 73:

“For I *was* envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ¹¹ And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” ¹² Behold, these *are* the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase *in* riches. ¹³ Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, And washed my hands in innocence. ¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.

¹⁶ When I thought *how* to understand this, It *was* too painful for me— ¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their end. ¹⁸ Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

²⁸ But *it is* good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in Jehovah GOD, That I may declare all Your works.”