

14.1.24 am

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Date: 14 January 2024

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning. I don't think there's any visitors with us this morning. It's not that time of year, but it's good to see everybody. And if you're able to stay behind for tea or coffee at the end, please do so.
- The intimations are on the screen, and so we'll just take a moment to go through them. Six o'clock, the evening service, as we continue through Ecclesiastes. YF is back tonight. And the Deacons Court meets tomorrow at half past six, for those who are concerned with that.
- Ladies' Fellowship at the usual times. And Little Fishers on Tuesday morning, Road to Recovery back on Tuesday evening. Prayer meeting on Wednesday at half past seven in real life and on Zoom.
- And the Friday clubs, they start back this Friday. So that's Jam and Connect Rooted started last week. And if you have got some time and if you're able to help on a Friday afternoon, I think we're still needing helpers for Jam and Connect.
- And probably Rooted as well. So if you're able, please come and have a word on myself or Stuart or Gordon or Maddie. And just make yourself available, please.
- [1 : 1 4] Services next Sunday will be at the usual times, taken by myself, God willing. Cleaning rota there. And the Island Study Conference, that's two weeks.
- A week on Friday it begins and it runs through till the Sunday. This year, just for your interest, the two speakers at the conference are John Lachie MacLeod, who's been with us many times here.
- And so he's going to be taking some of the meetings. The other minister that's going to be preaching is David Court, who was a Church of Scotland minister. He's now in the Free Church. I think he preached in the Church of Scotland here in Tarbert in the past.
- And he's known to a number of you. So that's over that weekend. And then we're looking for a few more volunteers to help with baking and making soup, donating sandwiches, a couple of times a year for the committee lunches.
- If you can add your name to the list in the porch, please do so. So, Women for Mission, Thursday 25th January, Nero Felting with Margarita.
- [2 : 1 8] I don't think I'll go any further with that. I'm not sure where that is, but it sounds very interesting. And please take note of that also. These, I think, are all the notices.
- So let's begin this time of worship. And we'll worship God at not quite the very beginning, but the beginning of a new year. And we'll sing that hymn that's familiar, that hymn that's precious to us.
- Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.
- Bought thee all else to thee, save that thou art. Thou my best, O Lord of my day, O Lord of my night.
- Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light. Be Thou my wisdom, Thou my true word.
- [3 : 4 1] I am with Thee, Thou with me, Lord. Thou my great Father, I Thy true Son.

Thou with me dwelling, and I with Thee one. Be Thou my battle, shield sword for the fight.
Be Thou my dignity, Thou my delight. Thou my soul's shelter, Thou my high tower.
Raise Thou the heavenward, O power of my power. Riches I lead, O thorn and sent he raised.

Thou my inheritance, now and always. Land the holy first in my heart.

[5 : 09] I, King of heaven, my treasure, Thou art. Thou my kingdom of heaven, after victory won.
May I reach heaven's choice, O bright heaven's sun. Heart of my own heart, whatever before.

Still be my vision, O ruler of all. Let's unite our hearts in prayer.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day. We thank you for another year that you have brought us into.

And we thank you, Lord, that we are able to come in response to your call this morning.
And we thank you that you have given us a heart that is inclined to worship you.

[6 : 24] And we acknowledge, Lord, that you are the God who is worthy of our worship. We look around us in this part of your creation and we see your majesty.

We see your splendor. And all these things are signposts to the God who made everything. And who made everything with a word from nothing, which is beyond our comprehension.

But then we are finite creatures and we bow before the infinite God. And we thank you, Lord, for your word. Your word which we read. Your word which we sing.

Your word which we meditate upon. And we thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher. The one who inspired the words that we read. That promises to teach us.

As we open that word and we pray, as the sign over my head says, we pray that we would see Jesus. That we would hear Jesus. We pray that as we go into a new year, we would be able to say with a hymn writer that you are our vision.

[7 : 31] And we thank you that when we are looking in faith to Jesus, we have the promise of salvation. We think of that prophecy in Isaiah. Look unto me and be ye saved.

And we ask, Lord, that each one of us here would be found looking to Jesus. We pray for anybody here who has not yet looked in faith to Jesus. We know that in this world there are many things that catch our eye.

And yet there is only one who can save us. There is only one name under heaven by which we can be saved. And we ask, Lord, that each one of us would be looking to Christ.

And for any who haven't yet done that, we pray that even today you would work in the power of the Holy Spirit. That there may be someone here or someone who watches at a distance who will look in faith to Jesus.

To have their sins forgiven. And that salvation would come in to their hearts. And yet for those who are trusting in Jesus, those who may have looked to Jesus many years ago.

[8 : 33] We know that that's the calling that's placed upon us for each day. That still we are distracted. Still we are sinners. Still we wrestle with doubts and fears.

Still we have many struggles. And so we must with Peter, as we think about last Sunday, as Kenny I preached. We pray that with Peter we would not look at the waves that crash around us.

That we wouldn't be buffeted by the wind in Providence. But Lord, that we would look and keep our eyes fixed upon Christ. The one who is able to steady us.

The one who is able to keep us. So help us, we pray. In this hour and in each hour that you give to us to worship you. Help us to remember that our chief end.

Our first purpose in life. The reason that we were made. Is that we would glorify God. And as we do so, we know that we experience joy. And we experience peace.

[9 : 28] And we are given a friend who sticks closer than a brother. We pray Lord for help. We thank you that you are the God who saves us. You are the God who helps us.

The one who is close at hand in times of distress. And we pray for those who may be going through different kinds of distress this morning. We pray for those who are sick.

We are conscious that there are many who are ill. And we know that there are bugs. And we know that there are those who wrestle with illness. And there are many different reasons Lord that we have struggles.

But as we think of different people. As we think of those who have been in hospital. As we think of those who are in homes like Harris House in Leverborough.

As we think of those who will be watching in their own homes at this time. Wrestling with different things. We pray Lord that you would meet each one at the point of their need.

[10 : 27] And as we think of faces. And as we think of names. And as we bring them to you. In the quietness of our own hearts. We ask Lord that you would minister to them. And that you would grant them that grace that is sufficient for each day.

We pray for our young people Lord. As they come into exams in school and in college. We pray that you would steady them over these next couple of weeks. That you would help them to study.

That you would help them to recall all that they do study. And that you would help them and us to remember. That our identity is not determined by the results that we get.

Or by the money that we make. Or by the jobs that we do. But our identity and our worth is found in knowing Jesus. And we pray that each one of the young ones.

As we pray for those in middle age. And those who are coming up in years. We pray that each one would know the blessing of being in Christ. We pray for our nation.

[11 : 27] A nation that is far from you. And we acknowledge that Lord. We confess it. We pray that you would draw us back. We pray for those that you are allowed to be in authority over us. And we ask that you would give them humility.

That they would look to Jesus. And that once more we would know times of blessing in this land. And we pray for not just this nation but all nations.

We see so much brokenness in this world. And we know that that's the consequence of sin. But we pray Lord that you would be at work. That all nations would be found looking to and trusting in Jesus.

And we pray especially for the Middle East. That place where Jesus the Prince of Peace was born. And yet we see so little peace at this time. And so we ask Lord that you would open the eyes of all in that place.

That they would see that the Messiah has come. And he offers peace to all who trust in him. So hear our prayers. Continue with us in this day. Lead us and guide us by your spirit as we seek to worship you.

[12 : 32] We pray that our worship would be acceptable. That we would worship in spirit and in truth. And we ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen. Boys and girls would you like to come forward please.

Amen. Amen. How are you all today?

Some of the noisier characters are not present today. So this may be harder work. But you won't. You'll speak to me. Sean is here. You're all here. Come around a wee bit here so I can see you properly.

Christy's hiding in there behind the lector. I'm coming around this wee bit. I don't think I've had a proper chat with you since Christmas. Did you enjoy Christmas?

Pardon? Did you enjoy Christmas? Yes. Did you enjoy Christmas? Yes. And what did you do? Did you get any presents? Tell me some of the presents you got at Christmas.

[13 : 46] Sean? A PS5. A PS5. PlayStation number 5. Good stuff. What else did you get? Family, what did you get at Christmas? A chocolate fountain.

A chocolate fountain. Can I come to your house? Good stuff. I didn't even know they existed. That sounds like the stuff of dreams.

Chocolate fountain. What else did you get? Anyone else? Did the rest of you not get any presents? Daniel, did you get a new cow or something? No? A tractor?

What did you get? Can't even remember. Be encouraged, DJ. Shawnee?

Shoes. Shoes? That shoes you're wearing there? No, I got them after. These are Nike or Max's 90, aren't they? What kind of shoes did you get? Football shoes.

[14 : 45] Football shoes. Good stuff. Finley, you've got more? A Wii. A Wii? That's a... A Wii is like a PlayStation, but it's different, isn't it?

Good stuff. Are you enjoying playing with it? What's your favourite game? The Mario Kart. Mario Kart. That's a good game. What about the rest of you?

Christy, you're awful quiet today. What did you get for Christmas? Converse. You're wearing them just now. And they're at least six inches tall, aren't they? You'll get dizzy wearing these.

Tell me this. Did any of you expect to get a present? But you know how the post was quite slow before Christmas.

Did any of you expect to get a present and it didn't come on time? What about you? Was it just me?

[15 : 46] Do you know that sometimes happens, doesn't it? You order something. Or somebody says, I've got a present for you and it's coming and it's going to come by this time. And then your birthday passes and there's no present.

And you have to wait for it. And on Christmas, well it wasn't Christmas morning, it was two days after. And when we were both Mary's parents and brother and sister-in-law and all that, they said, we got one present for you for Christmas.

They got me other things, but they said, we got your main present for Christmas. It's something to do with coffee. And you're going to love it, but it hasn't come. But maybe it'll come tomorrow.

So I got up the next morning. Postman came. No sign of it. Next morning. Wonder will the post. Wonder will the coffee. So I love coffee. I thought, maybe it's a grinder.

So you can grind up the beans. Or maybe it's some kind of a coffee machine. Maybe it's just some special coffee. I was thinking, because they didn't have any nice coffee in the house. Maybe it's going to come the next day.

[16 : 52] And I was watching for the postman. No, it didn't come. And now it's the 14th of January. Still not come.

So I've got to wait. And it's not the easiest thing, Corrin, to wait, is it?

But sometimes we have to wait. Sometimes we have to wait. But it's worth the wait if you know that the thing that's coming is going to be good.

If I'm going to get a really nice cup of coffee because of this thing that's going to come, then it's not the easiest thing to wait. But it's worth the wait. You know, in a second we're going to sing a psalm.

And it's Psalm 40. And it starts by saying this. What do you think that means?

[17 : 56] What does it mean to wait on the Lord? For me? No, it's tricky, isn't it? What do you think it means to wait on the Lord?

And if you were waiting, and if you were waiting for the postman, the postman might come or he might not come. Have you ever been waiting for a friend? And they said, I'll meet you at 11 o'clock outside the TI car park.

And you go there and it's 11 o'clock and 5 past and 10 past. Have you ever been there and they've not turned up for ages? Sometimes that happens. But do you think if we wait for God, he'll ever let us down?

Of course not. You know, it says in one verse in James, if we draw near to God, then he will draw near to us. So if we wait for God, then he'll never leave us hanging.

So how do we wait for God? How do we hear God speak? If we want to be close to God, and we want to hear him speak, where will he speak to us?

[19 : 11] What book will he use? The Bible. Is that what you want to say? The Bible. So every time that we want to hear God speak, we can open the Bible, and we can start to read, and he'll speak to us.

And if we ever want to, if we ever want God to hear what we want to say, how do we speak to God? How do we speak to God?

What? We pray. And do you think he hears our prayers? Or do you think he just says, I'm too busy? Really? Do you think he hears our prayers?

So, when we read in the Psalm, I waited for the Lord my God, what he wants us to do, is he wants us to speak to him.

And if we speak to him, he will listen, and he will answer our prayers. And if we want to hear God speak to us, we open the Bible.

[20 : 16] And if we pray, and ask for his help, he'll speak to our lives, he'll speak into our hearts, and he'll tell us the things that we need to hear.

So, if we ever wait for God, he never leaves us hanging, but he'll always meet with us. So let's pray, and let's ask God to hear our prayers.

Thank you, Lord, for your word, and we thank you that as we wait upon you, you always meet with us, and you always speak to us. We thank you that you've given us the Bible.

It's not an ordinary book. It's your word. And we pray, Lord, that you would speak to us through your word. We thank you that you've given us the gift of prayer. And we thank you that we don't have to use fancy words.

Sometimes we don't even have to use any words at all. We just have to say to you, please help me. You see my heart. And we thank you that when we pray, you always hear us, you always listen, and you always answer in the way that's best.

[21 : 20] We thank you that it says in the Bible that those who wait on the Lord will have renewed strength. And we need that, especially at the beginning of a new year, when we think about all the things that might be ahead of us.

We know that we need your strength. And so we pray that as we wait upon you, as we take time to be in your word, and as we take time to be in your house, and at Sunday school and at YF, we pray that you would give us strength and that you would meet with us each day to hear our prayers.

Bless the children as they go to Sunday school now. And we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now from the psalm that we just quoted. Psalm 40, verses 1 to 5.

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. That means he waited for a wee while. You know, sometimes we're like, oh, I don't want to have to wait. The psalmist says, I waited for God and I waited for a wee while.

But he did hear me. He inclined his ears to hear us. And so let's sing now about that. Psalm 40, verses 1 to 5.

[22 : 26] I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear.

He took me from a fearful bit and from the mighty grave.

And on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, a God to magnify.

Many shall see it and shall fear. And on the Lord rely.

[24 : 12] O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such, a stern aside to lies.

O Lord my God, who many are, the wonders of us, thy gracious thoughts to us were fine.

Above all thoughts are gone. In order none can wreck on them.

To thee if them be fair, I'll speak of them, I would they mourn, than God be not for all.

Okay boys and girls, if you head through to Sunday school. And as they go, remember to pray for them.

[26 : 08] And we're going to turn to Matthew chapter 2.

Matthew chapter 2. I'm actually going to read a wee bit further back than what I said. So we're going to read from the beginning of the chapter through to the end of the chapter.

Matthew chapter 2 and from verse 1. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw a star when it rose, and have come to worship him. Then Herod the king heard this, when Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

[27 : 29] For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him. After listening to the king, they went on their way.

And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

[28 : 38] And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, Out of Egypt I called my son.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah weeping in loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more.

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the place of his father Herod he was afraid to go there and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled that he would be called a Nazarene.

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with Mooji Satsang with Mooji for the help of the Holy Spirit.

[34 : 46] We are needy, we are poor, we are those who need to be guided, we are those who need strength. And for some of us, Lord, we need to receive salvation.

So we pray, Lord, that you would be with us now and we ask for your help. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, this is early on, two weeks in to a new year.

I won't ask the question, but I expect for some of us there might be a new year resolution. So that might have been shared or they might have been kept secretly. But I want to begin today with the question, what's the most important thing that we can do at the beginning of a new year?

[36 : 06] What is the single most important thing that you and I can do as we can adventure out into a new year?

Well, it's not to sort out our finances, even though our finances might need sorting out. Or it isn't to get the living room redecorated or the shed tidied.

The most important thing is not that we get promoted or we go from loss into profit in our business. The most important thing is not that we get some kind of structure into our retirement.

The most important thing is not that we get fit and healthy. The most important thing that we can do at the beginning of 2024 is consider a response to Jesus.

It's to figure out where are we in our relationship with Jesus. And with Matthew 2 open, I want to think about three responses to Jesus that we see in this chapter.

[37 : 26] And as we look at these responses, let's consider where we are in response to Jesus, where we are in relation to Jesus. So the first response is a response of adoration.

And that's on the part of the wise men. So we'll consider that firstly. The second thing that we see is the response of antagonism. And we see that in King Herod.

And the final response that we see in this chapter is a response of acceptance, of that faithful, trusting acceptance of Jesus.

And we see that in Joseph. So let's think, first of all, about the first response. And that's the response of adoration that we see in the wise men.

So we'll kind of cut into the chapter at verse 10. And we see in verse 10 that when the wise men, when they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

[38 : 30] And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him, that's Jesus, gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. This is where we left off at Christmas time.

This is the last thing that we were looking at together. We were thinking with the children about the wise men. And the wise men from the east, they're probably from Iraq, Iran, that kind of area.

And verse 10 tells us that they saw the star. These wise men, they were experts in astrology. And there was something about this star that they saw in the sky that caught their attention.

Now, if we just pause there for a moment, let's just think about how a star in the sky actually ended up leading them to Jesus.

[39 : 41] Well, I think to get some kind of understanding of that, we actually have to rewind about 500 years in time. And 500 years before the time of these wise men making this journey, there was a man called Daniel.

And Daniel had been captured. He'd been taken from his home and he had been brought into Babylon against his will. And in Babylon, he was educated in a particular way.

And Daniel, in Babylon, he sought to be faithful. He continued to worship God and he prospered. And we know the stories from Sunday school. I haven't got time to go through them all.

How Daniel was faithful, how we can dare to be a Daniel. But Daniel, as he remained faithful to God, his life had an impact in that place in Babylon.

And in Daniel chapter 5 and verse 11, it says that the king made him, that's Daniel, the chief of the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers.

[40 : 49] And the astrologers. So if we think about Daniel and think about what he was doing in Babylon, Daniel essentially was the boss. He was the CEO.

He was the president of the wise men. And Daniel, as a man who believed in God, he would have shared these biblical texts with the wise men that were under his authority.

Daniel would have spoken to these wise men about prophecies that told of a coming Messiah. Daniel would have shared texts like Numbers 24, 17, which says this, I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.

That was a prophetic text. And so the wise men all these years later, these wise men who'd been educated to know these ancient texts, they see this star, they likely connect it with these ancient texts that Daniel had brought into the wise man training syllabus, and they follow the star to Israel as they look for this promised king.

[42 : 15] And I want to just pause there for a moment just to take in the challenge and the encouragement even out of that sidebar point.

Think about Daniel. For years, in a far from ideal situation, he's quietly faithful.

and each day when it was okay and also when it was very risky and even when it was prohibited, even when it was outlawed, Daniel prayed.

He took time to wait upon the Lord. Daniel was in the word of God and Daniel in a place that was hostile to the God that he trusted.

Daniel continued to live a holy life year after year and day after day. In that difficult context, Daniel worshipped God, he lived a holy life, and now 500 years later, his witness seems to be used to bring people like these wise men to Jesus.

[43 : 40] And so the lesson for us today is keep on being faithful. The beginning of a new year, keep on being faithful.

Keep on keeping on. Keep on praying. Keep on pointing people to Jesus. keep on being in the word of God. Keep on living for Jesus, even though it isn't the easiest time to be a Christian.

Even though it isn't in vogue in our country. Even though there is hostility to the name of Jesus. Keep on being faithful. Keep on being a good witness because God will use those who want to witness to the glory of Christ.

but he may not use our witness in our lifetime. Just like Daniel. Centuries later, his witness has been used.

I can look out even in this congregation here just now and I can see people who came to faith through the steady witness of a parent or a friend and a parent or a friend who went to glory long before the people I can think of came to faith.

[45 : 08] So that's all kind of a sidebar. Wise men They follow the star they connected with a text that likely Daniel taught them and it takes them to Jesus.

And think about the journey that these wise men ventured out on. They leave their homes to search for Jesus and it was costly.

It was likely at least a month's worth of a journey 800 miles. It's quite a lot of loss of income. Family life is disrupted because they're away from those that they're connected with or those that they're supposed to be supporting.

Their work routine is turned upside down all because they're searching for Jesus. They're seeking Jesus. and they find Jesus.

And verse 11 tells us that when they saw him they fell down and worshipped him. They adored him. Think about that response.

[46 : 27] Have you ever when we meet a baby these wise men from a different place far away they eventually arrive at this house that they've been directed to.

Mary and Joseph are there and the baby Jesus. He might have been even two years old by this point. What did they do? Did they say oh he looks cute?

No it doesn't say that. Did they say can I get a hold? It doesn't say that either. It says that they fell down and they worshipped him.

They adored him. How much did they know about Jesus? Not very much. But from far away from a different culture.

But when they see him they respond in worship and adoration. J.C. Ryle says they believed in him when they saw him a little infant on Mary's knee and worshipped him as a king.

[47 : 40] This says Ryle was the crowning point of their faith. They saw no miracles to convince them. They heard no teaching to persuade them. They beheld no signs of divinity and greatness to overaw them.

They saw nothing but a newborn infant, helpless and weak and needing a mother's care, like any one of ourselves. And yet when they saw the infant, they believed that they saw the divine saviour of the world.

They fell down and worshipped him. Now what's that got to do with us? Well as we look around even in this building, I would say almost everybody in this room knows more than the wise men knew about Jesus.

We all have an advantage in that sense over the wise men in respect of Jesus. We have the Bible. We have the promises of the Messiah, the whole spectrum of them in the Old Testament.

we can read them at any time. But not only do we have the promises, the prophecies in the Old Testament of the Messiah to come, we see the fulfilment of these promises in the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

[49 : 10] We have the New Testament, we have the gospel message, we have the eyewitness accounts of the saviour, the one who was promised, the one who came, who lived, who died, and who rose.

We have the letters as we scan on the Bible of Peter and of Paul and of John that are explaining to us who Jesus is and why he came.

We have all this. We have the benefit of knowing much more about Jesus than the wise men did.

We've been taken through Sunday school, the wise men weren't. We've been surrounded with people who know Christ, the wise men, they didn't.

We have more knowledge about Jesus than the wise men did, but the question is what are we doing with that knowledge? What are you doing with the knowledge that you have?

[50 : 21] There are people here who have sat in these chairs and sat in pews before it for years and decades. But are you adoring Jesus?

You're worshipping Jesus? Are you trusting Jesus? Because that's what we see in the life of these wise men.

the wise men, they adore Jesus. That's the first response. The second response is the response of antagonism in Herod. Verse 16.

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became furious. And he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men, and then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah.

A voice was heard in Ramah weeping and loud lamentation. Rachel, weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more. So let's think now for a moment about Herod.

[51 : 35] And antagonism is a word that doesn't do proper justice to the level of hatred that he seemed to have focused on this child.

And from the moment that Herod hears about this king that was to be born, from the moment Herod is alerted to the wise men who are speaking about this king of the Jews, he is troubled.

It tells us that in verse two. And when Herod is troubled, everyone is troubled because Herod is totally unpredictable. He's totally unstable. And so Herod, he hears about this baby that's been born, that's to be the king of the Jews.

And yes, this child is just a child, just a baby, but the thing about babies is babies grow up. So Herod, he thinks about the future, he wants to eliminate the risk of a king coming up to challenge him.

So Herod helps the wise men to locate the birthplace of Jesus, that's verses four to six. And then Herod tells the wise men to come back and tell him where the child is, that's verses seven and eight.

[52 : 52] But Herod's heart is not inclined to worship. He is antagonistic, he wants to kill Jesus. And why does he want to kill Jesus?

He wants to kill Jesus because he doesn't want to have a king over him. Herod wants to be king. Herod wants to be lord. Herod wants to be the one who rules and reigns over his life and the lives of all those around him.

William Barclay, the commentator, says, this gives us an insight into the character of Herod. Barclay says, if Herod suspected anyone as a rival to his power, that person was promptly eliminated.

He murdered his wife, Mariam, and her mother, Alexandra, his eldest son, Antipa, and two other sons, Alexander and Aristobulus.

They were all assassinated by him. Augustus, the Roman emperor, had said bitterly that it was safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son.

[54 : 04] Herod's character. This is the character of the man. This is the paranoia and the power greed that consumes Herod.

And so he wants to locate and he wants to eliminate Jesus. And when he hears that the wise men have seen Jesus, that they've worshipped Jesus, and they've outsmarted him by going another way, that's in verse 12, Herod is furious.

And he gives an order for all the male children in that area, aged 2 or under, to be killed. Which is shocking.

And yet, it doesn't make a huge imprint in history because this is the kind of thing that Herod routinely did. Anyone that was a threat was eliminated and the casualties didn't matter.

As long as he remains king, as long as he remains in power. And so this awful act is ordered and is carried out.

[55 : 22] Bethlehem incidentally was about the size of Harrahs. They reckon Bethlehem had about 2,000 people in it. And they reckon as commentators think that at least 20 babies were murdered by Herod's order.

Which is horrendous. So why do we need to see this? That's a question that I've wrestled with.

Why do we have to read this? Why after all the warm glow of Matthew chapter 1 as we see the fulfillment of the Messiah, as we read about the birth of Jesus and all the warmth that comes with that, why after that beautiful story do we have to be confronted with this?

Why do we need to see this? Well I think there's two reasons at least. And the first reason is we need to read this account because we need to see the ugliness of sin.

Satan loves to dress sin up. He loves to make it sparkle. And we can pick up any magazine and we can switch on any TV program and sin will be presented to us as a harmless, slightly mischievous, naughty, but delicious thing.

[56 : 52] As we open the pages of Scripture, we're given a true impression, a true picture of sin. And it's ugly.

And we see that in Bethlehem, at the beginning of Jesus' life as these infants are killed, it's as a consequence of the sin in Herod's heart.

And if we were to fast forward from the beginning of Jesus' life in this world to the end of his life in this world, we're taken to Calvary. We see a cross, and we see nails being driven through the hands and feet of this child who grew up.

And this is a consequence of sin, your sin, and mine. So we need to read this story, we need to see this response so that we can see the ugliness of sin.

And the second reason we need to read this and see this response in this account is so that we will search our own hearts to see if there is any of Herod in this.

[58 : 10] Now Herod said openly, and he said violently, I will not have this man rule over my life. Herod is quite stark, he's quite brazen about the fact that he wants this child, this future king, he wants him dead.

But you know the same thing can be said much more quietly and politely and secretly, even in a church chair. because we can sit and listen to everything that we read about Jesus.

We can sit and hear the call of Jesus in the gospel. And yet we can determine that we will not bow. We will not worship.

We will not adore. We will not have this Jesus rule and reign and lord it over our lives.

And if that's our response, we have a lot in common with Herod. It's maybe not as out there. It maybe doesn't have exactly the same consequences that Herod's antagonism caused.

[59 : 35] But when we shake our fist at Jesus, when we refuse to allow him to reign over our lives, there is a sinful antagonism within us. And if you and I see it, we're to repent whilst we have time.

You know, ultimately, Herod did bow. Herod did stand before Jesus, and he bowed.

and we're told in Scripture that ultimately every one of us will bow before King Jesus. Every one of us will confess that he is Lord.

That's a certainty. That will happen. But what's uncertain is whether we will do so joyfully as those who know him, as those who love him, as those who will spend eternity with him and receive all the blessing that comes from him in heaven, or whether we bow before him fearfully, as those who will spend eternity apart from him, and apart from every blessing that comes from him.

Herod is antagonistic. Are there those who are antagonistic today still? Are there wise men? They adore Jesus, even though they know very little about him. They see just a little, they hear just a little, but they recognize for the little that they have that this one is to be worshipped.

- [61 : 27] The final thing we see here is the response of acceptance. It's a faithful, trusting response, and we see that in the life of Joseph. Look at verse 13.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him.

And he rose, took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, out of Egypt I called my son.

I think if I was Joseph, I'd be terrified to go to sleep at night. Because every dream that Joseph has seems to bring another life-changing instruction.

It seems to take him off in a whole new direction. I mean, think about Joseph's life over the last couple of years. He's just getting on with things as normal. He has a girl that he's in love with.

- [62 : 41] They're engaged to be married. And then he learns that this girl is pregnant. His wife-to-be is pregnant. She's carrying a child. And this child cannot be his child.

And so he makes plans to divorce her quietly. He doesn't share these plans. He just makes these plans to divorce her quietly. He has his horlicks. He puts on his pajamas. He goes to bed.

And in his sleep, an angel says to him, Joseph, you're not going to divorce her quietly. take her as your wife and the child she carries.

And so even though there's going to be huge tittle tattle, huge rumor mongering, even though he's going to have to face a whole lot of flack because of this thing that he's been told to do, he does it.

He just obeys. And he takes Mary, who's pregnant with this child that is not his. He takes her to be his wife.

- [63 : 50] The child is born, and Joseph names the child Jesus as the angel had instructed him. So his whole life has been turned upside down. And yet Joseph is accepted.

He responds in faith. And now sometime after Jesus is born, possibly up to two years later, Joseph is told in another dream, Joseph, pack your bags because you're going to Egypt.

To where? Well, to Egypt. You're going to a place where you'll have no family support. You're going to a place where you'll be regarded with great suspicion.

You have no friends there. nothing will be familiar. Nothing will be comfortable. You'll have the status of a refugee. And the reason that you have to go there is because the most powerful man in the area, the most unpredictable king that we've known in recent memory, King Herod, he has a sight set on killing this child Jesus.

So pack your bags, Joseph, you're heading off. Put yourself in Joseph's shoes just for a minute. Wouldn't it be tempting at that point just to say enough's enough. I'm out.

- [65 : 14] Mary, this was nothing to do with me and it's been traumatic and it's been disruptive and I've done what I can but I just have to walk now.

I have to go home. I have to be around my family. I have to get on with my life in some kind of order. That would be the temptation because this Jesus was not Joseph's son.

And ever since he learned of this baby that was to be born, his life has been in constant storm mode. So I think it must have been tempting to say, oh I'm out.

what does Joseph do when he gets this instruction in the dream? Well he just goes up to the spare room and he gets out the suitcases.

He packs up his life and even though it's costly and even though yet again it's destructive, he trusts and he obeys the word of God.

[66 : 22] This Jesus that he has taken into his life, he will not give up her. As the children sing in the song, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.

So Joseph says there's no turning back. I've accepted Jesus and there is no turning back and so off to Egypt he goes.

And so we can see Joseph and Mary in our mind's eye in our one bedroom flat in some undesirable scheme in Egypt. And then one night Joseph goes to sleep and there's another dream.

Verse 19 when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the child's life are dead.

And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. So at last, Joseph seems to get some good news in a dream.

[67 : 35] At last, Joseph can go home. So does Joseph head off home with Mary and Jesus and live happily ever after from there on?

Was it all easy from there on in? Well, it seems that no, it wasn't easy at all. Because he's got good news, but immediately he gets good news, he seems to have bad news.

Verse 22, But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee and went and lived in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled.

He shall be called a Nazarene. So another dream, and another move, and this move for Mary and Joseph was not to some highly desirable trendy area with a great school and lovely facilities.

This was not a move to a kind of sought after postcode area. This was not a move to Luskentower or Shillabost with a great beach view.

[68 : 53] this was a move to Nazareth. Jesus would grow up and he would be called a Nazarene. Wiersbe says the term Nazarene was one of reproach.

Can there be any good thing that comes out of Nazareth? John 1 46. And so this place that Jesus was willing to go, this name that Jesus would be known by, it was a name of derision.

It's a place that you wouldn't want to go. It was a place that was considered to be lowly and a place that you would want to avoid. And yet Joseph said, well, this is what we've been told to do.

So let's go, Mary. Let's accept the word of God. Let's accept the will of God. And let's live by faith.

And he did. Now, I want to just ask the question as we come to the close. Would you be willing to do all this for Jesus' sake? speaking to those who are Christians here, would you be willing to do all this for Jesus' sake?

[70 : 21] Would you be willing to deal with all this risk that Joseph dealt with? And all the disruption? And all the cost? And all the discomfort?

And all the unpredictability? And all the separation from family and friends and home comforts? Would you be willing to do all this for Jesus' sake?

Because Joseph was. And so we know very little about Joseph. He doesn't make a big noise about any of this.

He doesn't seem to want to receive a round of applause from us because of all these things that he did. But what we see in Joseph's life is just consistent and costly obedience.

We see a quiet, steady faith. And he's a great example to us. In an age where we have unashamedly elevated ourselves in an age where it's just the norm to want to live a life of self aggrandizement.

[71 : 43] I think we should resolve at the beginning of a new year to be a Joseph. Receive Jesus. Trust the word of God.

Not so much in dreams. We have the Bible. We have the book that Joseph didn't have. There's great humility and acceptance of the will of God in the life of Joseph.

Joseph. And it's a challenge to us. It's an encouragement to us. It's an example to us. All that he did, all that he accepted for Jesus sake.

But greater still is the humility and the acceptance of the will of God that we see in the life of Jesus.

not only was Jesus willing to go to Nazareth and be known as a Nazarene, Jesus was willing and he was humble enough to go to Calvary for our sin.

[73 : 01] Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 and verse say, Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

he did it for you and he did it for me. If we fast forward to the end of Jesus' life and think about him in the garden of Gethsemane as he pondered the sufferings of the cross in Gethsemane, as he looked into the cup of God's wrath that our sin filled.

Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

Wise men adore Jesus. Herod is antagonistic against Jesus. Jesus is accepted. Joseph accepts Jesus.

So these are three reactions. And Matthew is asking the question, where are you in this picture? What is your response to Jesus?

[74 : 25] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we pray that you would help us to search our hearts and we pray that you would enable us to respond in a way that brings glory to your name and salvation to our souls.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to conclude 760 in mission praise when we walk with the Lord. Trust and obey for there's no other way.

NINGNINGNINGNINGNING!

NINGNINGNING!NING! I will do his good will.

He abides with us still. And with all who would trust and obey. Trust and obey.

[75 : 44] For there's no other way. To be happy in Jesus. But to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise. Not a cloud in the skies. But his smile quickly drives it away.

Not a doubt nor a fear. Not a sigh nor a tear. Can abide while he trusts and obey.

Trust and obey. For there's no other way. To be happy in Jesus. But to trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear. Not a sorrow we share. But the time he doth which we repay.

[76 : 49] Not a grief nor a loss. Not a frown nor a cross. But it's blessed if we trust and obey.

Trust and obey. Trust and obey. For there's no other way. But there's no other way. To be happy in Jesus.

But to trust and obey. But to trust and obey. But we never can prove the delights of his love.

And to be happy in Jesus. For there's no other way.

But for them who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

[77 : 56] Then fellowship sweet, we will sit at His feet Or we'll walk by His side in the way.

What He says we will do, where He sends we will go. Never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.