

GraceCity Advent Study

Prepare Him Room



Week #3

December 10-December 16, 2018

“Prepare for Rejection” (Luke 2:1-7, Matthew 2:12-23)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! This week takes us into both the personal and corporate sabotage undermining God's plan for reconciliation through His son. Jesus enters the world unwelcome and must first identify as a refugee. So too, must we be prepared to be rejected, and to put our arms around the rejected.

Preparation:

Reflect on the person you were before you came to know Jesus. At what point in your life did he become real to you as Lord and Savior? If you were older when you came to faith, did you reject him actively or passively?

Read: Luke 2:1-7 and Matthew 2:12-23

Notes/Definitions:

Caesar Augustus: Known also as Octavian, he was the ruler of the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus's birth. Installed Herod the Great as king in Judea.

King Herod: Herod the Great, declared king of the Jews by the Roman senate in 40 BC and ruled over Judea from 37 BC to 4 BC. Revered for being fierce in battle, for his extensive renovation of the Jewish temple, and for ambitious construction projects—as well as extreme paranoia and cruelty.

Galilee and Judea: Two of the four provinces into which Israel was divided at the outset of Herod's kingship. From north to south, these were Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Idumea.

Bethlehem: Birthplace of Jesus and the hometown of King David (1 Samuel 16:1, 4). Located six miles south of Jerusalem. Translated “house of bread.”

Nazareth: Hometown of Jesus, which was the object of much ridicule and contempt among the citizens of Israel (see John 1:46).

Innkeeper: Actually...no! Contrary to legend, there is no direct mention of such an individual. It's reasonable to assume, though, that someone was running the facility and informed Joseph and Mary about the lack of vacancy.

Questions (Luke 2:1-7):

1. Read Luke 2:1-2. Note the timing and location of the events. Considering the proliferation of Greek and Roman mythological deities at this time, how significant is it that Jesus was a real person born at a real time in history?
2. Considering that Joseph and a 9-month pregnant Mary travelled 88 miles on donkeys from Nazareth to Bethlehem only to find no place to stay, what emotions do you think they were feeling in the hours before Jesus's birth? Fear? Doubt? Confusion? Vulnerability? What would you be feeling?

This study has been developed for personal reflection and group discussion. To participate in the conversation, join a GraceCity small group. For more information on times and locations, email smallgroups@gracecitybaltimore.org.

3. Let's assume that there was in fact an innkeeper who had to turn Joseph and Mary away for lack of room. We can give him the benefit of the doubt and understand that he was busy with paying customers. How could he have been more attentive to Joseph and Mary, and thus not have missed one of the greatest events in history?
4. “Busy” has been described like an acronym—burdened under Satan’s yoke. Without blaming the enemy for duties we freely take on ourselves, how does busyness relegate Jesus to being an interruption in our celebration rather than keeping him the centerpiece of it?

Questions (Matthew 2:12-23):

5. Although we never hear directly from Joseph in the biblical narrative, what can be discerned about his character from these verses, especially 14 & 21? Recall Week 2 as well.
6. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph a second time in Verse 13 (the first being Matthew 1:20). What was the angel’s message? How might Joseph have felt upon receiving this instruction?
7. By fleeing from King Herod to Egypt, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph became refugees. How does the call to hospitality in Hebrews 13:2 influence how we respond to those fleeing persecution?
8. Herod’s massacre (v.16) is one of the most infamous in history. In what ways was he doing the bidding of Satan? Considering 1 John 3:8, what was Satan’s motivation for wanting to do away with Jesus right after he was born?
9. Verse 23 tells us Jesus went with Joseph and Mary to live in Nazareth. Considering Nathanael’s words in John 1:46, Nazareth was apparently an unlikely place for a would-be Messiah to grow up. What preconceived notions do you place on Jesus or others? How do our expectations for what someone should be affect how we treat them, particularly if those expectations are not met?
10. Jesus’ rejection in these passages runs the gamut from being subtly ignored by those that do not make room for him to the actively hostile approach of King Herod. How do you see Jesus rejected today by others? In what ways do you exclude Jesus from your day-to-day?

Closing Prayer:

Herod’s rejection of Jesus was an active and conscious one. The people in Bethlehem on that first Christmas night were not malicious, but they were too preoccupied with their lives to pay him much attention. The people of Nazareth let their familiarity and faithlessness keep them from embracing Jesus. The results were equally tragic.

With this in mind:

Pray against any selfish ambition that robs Jesus of his rightful place in your life. Pray against any busy-ness that robs Jesus of his rightful place in your Christmas observance. And, pray for fresh eyes and ears to see the miracle of Christmas in a new way, and let us continue to be amazed. May it never get old or familiar to us.