



MATTHEW 2:16-18 | Man Proposes and God Disposes

Sunday, December 28, 2014 – Minor Festival of the Holy Innocents

¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

There is an old German saying, "Mann dent, Gott lenkt." It means, "Man thinks, God leads..." The translation limps a little in English, but the basic meaning is this: Man proposes, God disposes. Isn't that true? Throughout the pages of Scripture we see mankind trying to take matters into his own hands. people at the tower of Babel, Abraham lying about Sarah, Abraham having a child with Hagar, Jacob stealing the birthright from Esau, Moses striking the rock, and many other times. Outside of the pages of Scripture, throughout history, we see many examples of people trying to defy God and his order of creation: Nero, Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Mao. Through their God-given consciences, they knew what was right, what God desired. But they defied him; they aimed for selfish and self-centered endeavors. And all of them resulted in the same fates: failure and death.



You see, man can propose as many solutions and answers to problems in life and in the world, but really only there is only one who has the true answer: God. It is only he that proposes and disposes. It is only he that can cause answers and solutions to be given. And it is only he that can deliver from death.

In our lesson for today, Herod is enraged. He knew that his plans of assassination had failed. He knew that God had allowed this so-called "threat" to live. And he didn't like it. So instead of accepting reality Herod decided to take out his anger in the most heinous of ways. Giving the kill-order, soldiers within his army slaughtered nearly half a million boys in Palestine. It was a horrific scene. Bloodshed, tears, and weeping were seen and heard all over the land. And God knew it would happen...

Now I'm sure you wouldn't consider yourself in the same ranks as Herod. After all, historians have considered him to be in the same realm as Hitler, Stalin, or even Pol Pot. This heinous act of slaughter was the icing on an already bloody and horrible cake known as Herod's life. Surely you can't be lumped into that group, can you? Now I don't think any of you have a genocide in mind, but when we're told in

Scripture that sin begins in the heart, you and I are as guilty as the rest. You see, how often have we went against what God has said? How many times has God told us that something in our lives was a sin but we went ahead and did it anyway? God tells us that sex before marriage is wrong. But that's so 19th century...let's "get with the times." God tells us that we should give proportionately to what he has blessed us with. But he doesn't have a clue what it's like to live in this economy. God tells us to faithfully and consistently be in God's Word. But God doesn't understand what it's like to work two jobs, have a home to take care of, and children to feed and dress. He just doesn't understand, so I'll make the decision for him. That's some dangerous ground. It may not be a rock in the desert or a scary Egyptian official in your face, but you're in the same ranks as Abraham and Moses. And we do it so often without even thinking. Every thought, every word, every action is tainted with such self-centeredness and selfishness that we sometimes don't even realize what we've done until it's too late! And so like every generation of human being before us we share in the same fate: death. And God knew that, too.

Those children of Herod's plan—they too were sinful. We call it the "Slaughter of the Innocents," but not because they didn't deserve to die. They certainly did. They were sinful like you and like me. Each child inherited a sinful nature from his mother and father. But we call them innocent because their death came not at the hands of a just and righteous God, but at the hands of a maniacal tyrant.

But like every other man-made, sinfully motivated plan, it failed. And God knew it would. As the cries rang out in Ramah and the descendants of Rachel weeped for their dead sons, comfort was alive in Egypt. There, with his mother and father, the infant Jesus was safe. God knew what would happen. He made the political scene at that time such that Egypt could be a safe-haven for a fleeing family. God knew those innocent boys would die, but they would not die in vain. You see, even though Satan's attacks had already begun and he had already tried to make an attempt on Jesus' life, God wouldn't allow it. His Son had work to do.

And so even though man had proposed a sinful solution to a so-called "problem," God disposed of it. But a greater solution would take place a few decades later. Herod the Tyrant would be dead. A new leader would be in charge, and he would sentence this Jesus to death. Men proposed solutions: Peter fought back with the sword, his disciples tried to destroy his resolve, and Satan tempted him as he prayed. But Jesus could not be swayed. The man-made problem had to be solved. And the only solution was found in him. He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and became the sacrifice for sin that mankind needed.

No solution needs to be brought to God. Nothing must be done by you. Your sins are forgiven and gone. Your life is guaranteed. No slaughter, no tyrant, no atrocity can keep you from God's love in Christ. Dear Christian, the babe in the manger assures you of that. There is no need for fear of death or to be terrified of sin. They've been conquered by the babe of Bethlehem. You can propose any situation, any excuse, any statement you want...but dispose it. Because God already has. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

© 2014 Rev. Nathanael P. Seelow