

# The King Is Among Us – Joy Has Arrived

12/24/17 – Pastor Randy

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The story, *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* has a great message, but it still misses the point of the meaning of Christmas. The joy of Christmas is not just about the joy of family and community, as wonderful as that is. The joy of Christmas is the joy that comes from understanding and experiencing the hope, peace, and love that comes through Jesus Christ, our Savior-King!

This morning I want to talk to you about the original Grinch who tried to steal Christmas. His name was Herod. We could call him Herod the Grinch.

*Matthew 2: 1-11*

*Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."*

*King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:*

*'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,  
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,  
for a ruler will come from you  
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'*

*Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"*

*After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

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*When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.*

Why did God warn the wise men to go back to their country rather than to return to Herod? The reason is that Herod had lied to the wise men. He did not want to go and worship Jesus, the newborn King. He wanted to kill the newborn King? Why would he want to do that? Who would want to kill Jesus?

Herod's reign had been threatened for the past ten years. His first son tried to poison him so he could seize his father's throne. Now, suffering from an incurable disease, he hears about a baby who is destined take his throne. After struggling for years to maintain his control, he is not about to let some baby strip him of his power and authority. Herod serves as a fascinating illustration of the reason behind much of the hostility that exists towards Jesus & Christianity today. Jesus says, "You are a sinner, deserving of God's wrath and in need of my forgiveness. Turn from your rebellion and confess me as Lord, and I will forgive you and lead you in a life of freedom from sin".

For many that message is an unwelcome assault on their pride and their determination to live as their own God. What is truly good news – the opportunity to be under the loving authority of King Jesus – is perceived as bad news; the loss of personal autonomy and control! Herod liked being in the position of God and didn't want to surrender it.

Herod was so consumed with his own status & significance; protective of his own pleasure, prestige, and power, that he treated the very one who came to save him as if he was his enemy. The sad part of Herod's story is that he did not come to his senses and stop himself from doing the wrong thing. God had to stop him. God warned Joseph and Mary about Herod's plot so they were able to get out of Bethlehem before Herod could kill baby Jesus.

The news that Jesus came as our King is good news that ought to bring great joy. However, in order for that to be the case we first need to clear our minds of some negative preconceptions of what a King is and does. We often associate Kings, and almost all people in positions of great authority and

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power as corrupt, oppressive, and self-serving. The trust and respect of people, in and for, human authorities, is not very high and often with good reason. But not always for good reason. Sometimes the distrust and disrespect is due to the corrupt and evil hearts of the people. Sometimes the disrespect towards those in authority is because those authorities have not catered to the selfish and corrupt wishes of the people. But often it is because the leaders themselves have exercised their authority in a corrupt manner; abusing their power and exploiting their position for self-serving, unrighteous ends.

But that is not our King! He is a King that has proven he is deserving of being exalted over all creation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Here is why our King came for us and how he exercises his power and authority:

*“But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.” - 1 John 3:8*  
He is a King who conquers the evil and injustice that comes against us!

*“...the Son also became flesh and blood”, so that, by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.” Hebrews 2:14*

Jesus came *“...so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2:17* He is a merciful king. *“A bruised reed he will not break.”*

*But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17* He is a king who helps us conquer sin in our lives.

*But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.... Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. Gal. 4:4,5*

Our King Jesus is a king that has come to free us from oppression, not to oppress us. We are not his “subjects” but his sons and daughters. As children

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of this fatherly King, we are treated as heirs who receive all that is His. As heirs our inheritance includes the newly created, corrupt-free heavens and earth, immortal and incorruptible bodies, and the glory that comes with being in God's presence.

The joy of Christmas is the consequence of the hope, peace, and love of Christmas. Because hope has arrived, joy has arrived; because peace has arrived, joy has arrived; because love has arrived, joy has arrived. Anyone who has hope, peace and love is going to rejoice!!

The message that joy is not to be found in the presents we exchange at Christmas time but in the presence of family and friends is a good message - but it is not THE message. It is not THE GOOD NEWS that brings joy to all people! Family and friends are certainly more valuable than stuff, but even family and friends don't meet our deepest needs and are therefore unable to bring us absolute and ultimate joy. As great as some of our families are, they still have issues. Family gatherings are often a mixed bag of joy and grief, peace and strife, love and bitterness.

That's why we need King Jesus. He is the one that teaches us to love one another and live as reconciled children of God.

This past month we have been celebrating Christmas; the birth of Jesus Christ; Jesus the Messiah; Jesus the King! The King is among us! Hope has arrived, peace has arrived, love has arrived, and because hope, peace, and love have arrived...joy has arrived! Through the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection God has once again assumed his rightful place as King over us and among us....and "In His presence is fullness of Joy!"

NO ONE and NOTHING can take our King away from us and NO One and NOTHING can take us away from our King!

The one thing God cannot do is fail! The devil's plots against you are never more powerful than God's plans for you. The plots of your enemies to destroy you can never negate the plans your King has for you.

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*Close: He's My King (Video)*