

Matthew 2: “13 Now when [the Wise Men] 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.”

"Is America Weeping for Her Children?"

As I mentioned last week, it is Matthew who tells us of the visit by the Wise Men and the wicked actions by King Herod who refused to accept the new born King Jesus. It is a part of the Christmas accounts that perhaps we would like to ignore, but it is part of the reality of our fallen world, where we see life and death, good and evil. And so, this passage leads to our focus on the sin of abortion in our nation on or near the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion-on-demand though-out all nine months of pregnancy.

As we do so this morning I want to remind us about what the Bible teaches about the value of life, look honestly at the grave sin we have in our land today and remind us that Jesus always brings hope and life to even those who have made bad choices in the past!

To begin, we should remember that we oppose death because we value life! God has revealed to us that mankind was made in the image of God & is not some form of advanced mud or animal that managed to evolve by chance. God revealed this in the Book of Beginnings where he said, ““Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

AND we know from the Scriptures that not only is the human race important, but God cares about and knows about each individual. I will leave most of Psalm 139 for your further study, but listen to what God remembers about what none of us can remember!

Psalm 139: “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.

15 My frame was not hidden from You,

When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.

And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me,

When as yet there were none of them.

17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

And of course the value of human life is again affirmed by God when He commanded the death penalty for any who take another innocent life.

- Again, one who kills another person, does not simply kill another member of the species, but one made in the Image of God!

And death has been with us since Adam made that fateful choice in the Garden. From his son Cain murdering his brother, to the Nation of Israel sacrificing their children to Moloch, to Herod's slaughter in Bethlehem, down to our own age where abortion-on-demand is considered the "law of the land." Fully one third of the children conceived in America since 1973 have been aborted and it is often difficult to even image the impact of those missing tens of millions!

It was Joseph Stalin who said: "one death is a tragedy but a million deaths are 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...

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...

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

As we have done in years past, to help us understand the problem that we have in our nation today, we turn to the Old Testament with the reign of King Manasseh...

The King held responsible for bringing the practice of child sacrifice to Jerusalem.

[explain Moloch and their prosperity at the time]

They were more open with what they were doing, but the reasons were the same... Personal peace & affluence! *[mention Amazon special]*

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 in chains where he was tortured & mutilated: But 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."

- 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 more 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 thus 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!

- As is always the case, remember that 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, while hoping for His mercy...

- Remembering it is God's responsibility to determine how such justice & mercy will be meted 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, 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.

There are certainly 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. He found comfort in God's Temple, just as we will at His Table this morning!

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.

There is a very practical example of this principle in the Book of Acts:

The early Church had two fierce enemies that caused them great concern & trouble:

- Saul of Tarsus and the later King Herod who killed the Apostle James!
- Both were persecuting and 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 of these men in those troubled times.

And we need to understand that in both cases God answered those prayers by slaying the wicked... The proud King Herod fell before lowly worms, dying a miserable death, facing an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Saul of Tarsus was also slain before the Lord Jesus and then resurrected as Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles on the road to Damascus.

- BOTH of these men ceased to be enemies of God's Church in answer to the prayers of those early Saints!

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

- We should and must pray for such victories today, always trusting God for the proper responses!

In addition to offering help to those in need & faithfully preaching the Gospel ...

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 millions of 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 should pray for our civil magistrates 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 as part of the preparation for the coming of Jesus!

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.

I want to leave us today with a final important lesson from our text on how the Lord protects His people:

In our text we saw how God protected the baby Jesus from Herod and his soldiers.

God through the Prophet Jeremiah also offered comfort even to those parents who lost children at the hands of Herod's men.

And we today we should remember that through the Prophet Habakkuk God offered comfort, to the faithful in the Nation of Israel as it faced the coming judgment of Babylon:

- It is an important example for us today, because we do not know what is going to happen here in the United States.
- We have heard a lot of talk about making America great again, but with all the pomp and circumstance and another Presidential election this year, there is often not a single mention of the thousands of children who die each day!
- A nation that has \$22 TRILLION in debt and 60 million dead children, needs repentance, not patriotism!
- As I asked in my sermon title: Is America weeping for her children?

If we continue to ignore God's heart and warnings, our nation will collapse as many kingdoms before have done when they abandoned God? On the other hand, repentance can bring another great revival if the Church calls our people to repentance by turning from their wicked ways as King Josiah, the grandson of King Manasseh did for Judah?

- We should certainly hope, work and pray for the later!

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.”