

“The Folly of Opposing God”  
Acts 12:1-4; 18-25  
(Preached at Trinity, April 12, 2006)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we began **Chapter 12** we read of Herod brazenly vexing the church of Christ. He captured James and executed him with the sword – most likely by beheading him. Then he arrested Peter intending to put him to death. Remember, he did it because he loved the praise of man.
2. What men fail to recognize is that by attacking the church they are attacking Christ. When they harm a single hair of a Christian they are actually fighting against God. **Luke 17:1-2** – “Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! <sup>2</sup> It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”  
**Matthew 25:40** – “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”
3. Men also oppose God by failing to humbly bow before Him recognizing Him as the only true God.
4. As we come to the end of the chapter we find Herod vainly opposing God by receiving the praise of man instead of directing their praises to God.
5. History is filled with foolish men who thought they could oppose God.
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar - **Daniel 4:30-33** – “The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? <sup>31</sup> While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. <sup>32</sup> And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. <sup>33</sup> The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.”

- B. Voltaire - Claimed Jesus did not exist and that the Gospels were produced by those who wanted to create God in their own image. On his death bed a priest asked him to denounce Satan to which he responded, "Now now, dear man, this is not the time to be making enemies." He died in 1778 and in 1814 his remains were stolen and dumped in a garbage heap. None were the wiser to this until 50 years later when his enormous sarcophagus was opened and discovered it was empty. One author has written – "His ashes met the fate he feared all his life."
  - C. Ernest Hemmingway considered himself living proof that one could fight against God. He boasted of living a life of sin without consequences. At the end of his life he suffered from alcoholism and depression and in the end he put a shotgun to his head and ended his life
  - D. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared Christianity as the religion of weaklings. He spent the last years of his life insane.
5. Herod is another example of another whose life was an illustration of one who opposed God.
- I. He loved the praise of man
- A. There are two types of people – those who live for the praise of men and those who live only for the praise of God
    - 1. Jesus warned frequently of the sin of seeking the praise of Men  
**Matthew 6:1-2** – "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."  
**Matthew 6:5** – "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
    - 2. Many have lost Christ because they loved the praise of men  
**John 12:42-43** – "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: <sup>43</sup> For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."
    - 3. God's people are those who live for His glory
      - a. When the apostles were threatened for preaching the Gospel they boldly expressed their loyalty to God  
**Acts 5:29** – "Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."
      - b. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced certain death in the fiery furnace they boldly proclaimed:  
**Daniel 3:17-18** – "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

- c. Joshua boldly pronounced:  
**Joshua 24:15** – "choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . .  
 .but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
- B. One of the terrible blights upon fallen man is pride – we love the praise of men
1. Man, by nature, is truly concerned about what others think of them.  
 This is the nature of peer pressure. This is the nature of all fads and styles.
  2. Herod was behaving like all pride filled men – He was motivated only by his own self-interests. He was a politician and his popularity was important to his position. He would even kill if it meant his own personal advancement.
  3. Politicians today are still often motivated by the praise of men
  4. We all have to battle this curse.
  5. Even pastors have been given over to seeking the praise of men  
**2 Timothy 4:3** – "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"
    - a. Who are these teachers? Those seeking the praise of men. They give the people what they want to hear.
    - b. Sound doctrine is never received well by the world – but they will love smooth things.  
**Isaiah 30:9-10** – "That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: <sup>10</sup> Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:"
    - c. The great danger is giving them what they want. Instead of finding great value in the praise of God seeing reward in the praise of men.  
**2 Peter 2:3** – "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."  
 Reward comes in many forms – for some it is in gold, for others it is the compliments of men
- II. Herod also committed the crime of failing to give glory to God
- A. God is unique, Almighty – the only God
1. He declares His solitariness  
**Isaiah 45:22** – " Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else."  
**Isaiah 46:9-10** – "Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me, <sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"
  2. God also declares that He will not share His glory  
**Isaiah 48:10-11** – "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. <sup>11</sup> For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."

**Exodus 34:14** – “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.”

- B. The crime of Herod was that he robbed God of His glory – **Verses 21-23**
1. We are nothing without God
    - a. We have our life in Him. Our heart beats at His command. Every one of our abilities come from Him.
    - b. God tells Moses –  
**Exodus 4:11** – “Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”
  2. Pride is a high crime against God – It is one of the abominations God hates. Pride is elevating ourselves to the place of God.
  3. Our only boast is to boast about God  
**1 Corinthians 1:31** – “That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” In fact, we are commanded to glory in the Lord.  
**Jeremiah 9:23-24** – “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.”
- C. God demands absolute allegiance
1. Our lives must be consumed in Him
  2. Every thing that we think, say, and do must be for His glory  
**1 Corinthians 10:31** – “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”
  3. Anything less is to rob God of what belongs to Him
  4. We need to burn this into our heart and mind  
Why do you wear what you wear, drive what you drive? Why do people mark themselves with tattoos? Why do we spend so much time trying to attract attention to ourselves? It robs God of His glory.
  5. To rob God of His glory is to rise up in opposition to Him.  
**HE WILL HAVE NO RIVALS!**

### III. All who oppose God will come under the wrath of God

- A. Herod stands as a warning of those who oppose God
1. The crowd praised him for his speech. That wasn't his crime  
His crime was in receiving their praise
  2. Instead of giving glory to God he received their compliments to his own glory.
  3. God's retribution was swift. God struck him dead  
**Acts 12:23** – “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”
    - a. The word for “eaten of worms” here is σκωληκόβρωτος  
The root of the word often refers to a tapeworm

- b. Dr. Jean Sloat Morton comments in his book, *Science in the Bible*: “The disease is characterized by the formation of cysts, generally on the right lobe of the liver; these may extend down into the abdominal cavity. The rupture of such a cyst may release as many as two million scolices.”
    - c. According to Josephus, Herod lingered for five days in terrible pain.
  - 4. God will have no rivals - None will be allowed to rise up against Him  
**Psalm 2:1-4** – “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, <sup>3</sup> Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. <sup>4</sup> He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”
- B. This must be a warning to us
  - 1. We are prone to pride – by nature we love compliments
  - 2. From an early age we love attention. Temper tantrums are an effort to gain attention. We learn early on how to boast, how to garner praise.
  - 3. Even as Christians we have to be careful about seeking praise. This is why clapping (applause) is so inappropriate in worship.
  - 4. God's people must fear to receive the praise of men.
    - a. It is good to encourage one another, to compliment one another. All praise, however, belongs to God.
    - b. Our motivation in all that we do must be to point praise to God
  - 5. Compare Herod to Peter  
**Acts 10:25-26** – “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. <sup>26</sup> But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”

#### Conclusion:

- 1. May we be careful to give God the glory He deserves in all things.
- 2. On a side note, **Verses 24-25** record Barnabas and Paul returning to Jerusalem with the collection they had received for the relief of the saints. Herod’s evil plans had ended. He was dead but the church lived on and prospered. Herod thought he could crush the people of God. He is dead and **Verse 24** speaks of the victory of God  
 “But the word of God grew and multiplied.”