

The Mess That Christmas Makes



Sermon Text

Matthew 1-3



Big Idea

Popular notions of Christmas present it as something calm and peaceful, but the Biblical record portrays something much different. The arrival of Jesus makes a mess of our lives. The things we've been living for are threatened. The self-righteous facades we've built for ourselves are being exposed for what they are. Christmas certainly has our everlasting peace as its end goal, but it makes quite a mess of things along the way.

(1) Christmas Makes a Mess of Our Secular Ambitions (Matt 2:1-3)

All of us in one way or another have, what I would call, these secular ambitions. These are ambitions that don't originate from God, and don't really have anything to do with God. They just kind of orbit around the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I. I've got this vision, this plan, these ambitions for my life. Maybe you want that house on the hill. Maybe you want that girl down the street. Maybe you want that job with that company. Whatever it is, you have these ambitions. And now what I'm saying here is that Christmas—the arrival of Jesus Christ, whether in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago or in your life here this morning—is going to make a mess of that stuff real quick.

(2) Christmas Makes a Mess of Our Religious Facades (Matt 3:7-12)

Because we are all created in the image of God, because the law of God is in some way written on our hearts (cf. Rom 2:15), we all have this innate sense that we ought to be morally good, right. So we are constantly trying to reassure ourselves that we are. One of the ways we try to do this is actually by participating in religion. We engage in certain religious practices or activities, and we feel better about ourselves. And we look better to others too.

Christmas confronts our self-righteousness. Christmas says that we are so far off the mark, so helpless in our sin, so unable in and of ourselves to climb our way up to God that He had to come down to us. Jesus doesn't set aside His glory and come down to high-five humanity because we're just that awesome. He comes down to die for humanity because that's what we deserve from a holy God for our sin and He's desperate to keep us from it.

Whatever mess He's making with stuff out here in our lives, the ultimate goal is to clean us up where we need it most in here. The goal is to bring us back to life, to restore us to God. Jesus knows that our secular ambitions and our religious facades are killing us. And He wants to save us and bring us into so much more. So I don't know where you are this morning. Maybe you're with Herod going: "Step back, you're getting too close, I will live how I want to live." Maybe you're with the Pharisees and Sadducees saying: "I'm fine, I've got this. I'm a good person. I don't need this grace thing. Christianity is just a crutch. I can walk fine, thank you." Wherever you are, my encouragement for you this Christmas season is this: Give Jesus permission to make a mess of your life. He will only make it better!

Reflection Questions



- What *secular ambitions* are you able to identify in your own heart and life even now? Why would surrendering these things to King Jesus be hard for you? What are you scared He will do with it? As with Herod, how have you experienced the fallout of these ambitions? How is your unwillingness to release them truly destructive to you and others in the end? What would it look like to let Christmas have its way here?
- What *religious facades* do you set up? Is it hard for you to admit that you are wrong? Why do you think? Why did you come to church this morning? Was it to pay God back or get Him to bless you? Or was it simply to learn, grow, and love Him more? What would it look like to let Christmas have its way here?