

Clackamas United Church of Christ
Rev. Adam Ericksen
Sermon 1.6.19

King Herod – Making Israel Great Again

Arise! Shine! For your light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen among you!

Didn't you know that the prophet Isaiah was talking about me?! For I am King Herod the Great!

I am the greatest king that your people have ever seen. I'm the smartest king ever! I'm the greatest builder you have ever seen! I am great!

Isaiah was prophesying about me. For I am the great King Herod.

And you...I tell you to rise in the presence of your king and what do you do? You just sit there. Do you think of yourselves as "resisters" against a corrupt king?

Let me tell you about me. I came to rule the Kingdom of Israel by taking over from the Hasmonean kings. I am not corrupt! The Hasmoneans were corrupt! What did they ever do for you? Nothing! The Hasmoneans did nothing for you.

I am making Israel great again!

And don't you forget it.

I created this great Temple. The Temple of Herod. It's a great, big, beautiful Temple that will stand for thousands of years as a reminder to my glory.

I have created buildings throughout the Roman Empire with my money. I have given glory to Israel with these buildings. Everybody loves Israel because I have built their temples and their palaces. Rome loves me...

So why do you hate me?

Why have you always hated me? You call me a half Jew. My father was Jewish. My mother was Nabatean. And so I have always been half of what you are. My enemies always remind me that I'm not fully Jewish. And you have never accepted me.

I worked my way up in the military to become your king. With my background, I never should have become your king. This was clearly God's doing. But still you hate me. Why?

Is it because I have taxed you into poverty? Is it because you have so little and I have so much? You struggle to make your daily bread.

Listen. I tax you so that I can create these buildings and spread the glory of Israel throughout the world. We are in this together. Together we are making Israel great again!

So you have to sacrifice your money to me. It's a small price to pay for my glory. After all, my glory is all around you. We share in this together. Yes, I take your money and I build this great Temple. Yes, I take your money and I build palaces for myself like no other king who has ever lived in.

But you say that the only person who should king in Israel is a son of David and I am not a son of David!

Let me tell you this: I am greater than David ever was. I am Herod the Great!

David had to run from King Saul. David ran to the mountain of Masada and cowered in fear in the caves of Masada.

So I went to Masada and I built a palace on top of that mountain. Where David cowered in fear, I live in luxury because I am greater than your King David!

Oh, you talk about David's son, King Solomon. Sure, Solomon built his Temple. But it is nothing compared to my Temple. I am greater than David and I am greater than Solomon.

Do you know why Rome picked me to be your king? It's because I know how to keep the peace. You resist. And do you know what I do with resisters? I lock 'em up.

And then I kill them. That's what I do to resisters, so you be careful.

Don't think that I'm above killing people to keep the peace. That's how peace is kept! Peace through strength!

I've killed my own children. I killed my own wife. I killed my best friend because I thought he was having an affair with my wife.

Wait a minute...Do you hear that...You don't hear that...That's someone in the back...In the other room...He's plotting to kill me...I must kill him first...I can't trust anyone.

Everyone is out to get me. My family is out to get me. My friends are out to get me. My inner circle of advisors are out to get me. Everyone in Jerusalem is out to get me. You are probably out to get me, too.

One time, there were these three men from the East called the Magi who came to talk to me. They said that they saw a star rising and they said it was the start for the newborn King of the Jews.

And I said, "Oh no. Even the babies are out to get me."

So I asked my scribes, "Where is the newborn king supposed to be born?" And they replied, "In Bethlehem, in the City of David."

So I told the Magi to go to Bethlehem and when they find him to come back and let me know so that I could pay him homage. But those wise men were wiser than I thought. They did not come back to me, but they left another way.

And so what did I do? I told my men to go to Bethlehem and kill all those baby boys. Because nobody is going to take my kingdom away from me!

What is this little table doing here in the middle of this room? A communion table? A little bread and a little wine. Are you planning some kind of party later on? This is pathetic. Let me tell you about my parties. I invite hundreds of people to my palace. I even invite my enemies. And I have a lavish feast food and wine. I invite my enemies over and I give them wine...with poison. That's how I defeat my enemies. Either with the sword or with poison. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that I defeat my enemies.

But you come down to this little meager table. And you say, "All of our differences are set aside so that we can come together in communion and love one another."

You need to know that the world is not a safe place. You need to know that those who live by the sword...*live by the sword!*

Wait...There's that noise again. Do you hear it? It's that man plotting to kill me in the other room...I must go kill him.

Before I leave, you need to know that there will be others to come. There will be false Messiahs. One will be born in a manger. He will tell you to love one another. To love even your enemies.

Well, I guess that's the choice you have to make, isn't it?

You live by the Kingdom of Herod or you live by *his* Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of hate or the Kingdom of love.

There's that noise again in the back!

I must go defeat my enemies. You make your decision. Good bye.