

How does the story of Herod's opposition to Jesus challenge us to examine what 'thrones' or competing priorities we allow in our own hearts?

Joseph received divine direction through dreams and immediately obeyed, even when it meant uprooting his family. What makes obedience to God difficult in your life, and how can you cultivate Joseph's responsiveness?

The sermon emphasizes that God chooses humble people and means to accomplish significant things. How does this truth challenge our culture's obsession with status, influence, and self-promotion?

When Jesus is truly King of our lives, we will face opposition from the world. What specific areas of your life have you been tempted to compromise your faith to avoid conflict or gain approval?

The wise men traveled great distances to worship Jesus, while Herod sought to destroy Him. What determines whether someone sees Jesus as a threat or as worthy of worship?

How does reading God's Word regularly help us 'hear from God' and lead our families according to His plan, as Joseph did?

The sermon states that being a Christian means being a 'Christ follower,' not just holding a religious identity. How would your daily life look different if you truly followed Jesus in every area?

Herod built monuments to himself that now lie in ruins, while Jesus reigns forever. What are you building your life upon, and will it last beyond your lifetime?

The pastor challenged us to surrender three things to Jesus as King: obedience, allegiance, and trust. Which of these three is most difficult for you personally, and why?

As we enter a new year with 31 days of prayer and fasting, what 'first things' need to become prioritized in your relationship with God before you pursue other goals?

Small Group Guide: "When Jesus is King"

Matthew 2:12-23 | December 29, 2025

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

As we close out 2025, what's one word that describes your year? Share briefly why you chose that word.

Sermon Review (5 minutes)

Main Points:

When Jesus is king, He will be opposed

When Jesus is our king, we will be opposed

With Jesus as king, He reigns forever

Key Scripture: Matthew 2:12-23

Discussion Questions (40-45 minutes)

Part 1: Understanding Opposition to Jesus

Why was King Herod so threatened by the birth of Jesus? What does his response reveal about the human heart when confronted with Jesus' kingship?

The sermon mentioned that "when Jesus is king, he threatens every other throne." What are some modern-day "thrones" or "kings" that compete for Jesus' place in our lives? (Examples: career, comfort, control, approval of others, etc.)

Read Psalm 14:1. How does living "as if God does not exist" manifest in everyday decisions, even for Christians?

Part 2: Opposition as Followers of Jesus

Jesus said in John 15:18-21 that if the world hated Him, it will hate His followers too. Have you experienced opposition or pushback because of your faith? Share an example if you're comfortable.

The sermon challenged people-pleasers specifically. How do we balance loving others well while not compromising our allegiance to Jesus? Where have you struggled with this?

Joseph repeatedly received direction from God through dreams and obeyed immediately.

For the men: How are you leading your family spiritually? What makes it difficult to hear from God and lead accordingly?

For everyone: What habits help you hear from God regularly?

Part 3: Jesus Reigns Forever

The sermon contrasted Herod's temporary power with Jesus' eternal reign. How does remembering that Jesus reigns forever change how we face:

Difficult circumstances?

Uncertain futures?

Opposition or persecution?

Pastor Ashton said, "God loves to choose people who need God the most." Why do you think God chooses humble means and humble people? How does this encourage you personally?

Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

Surrendering to Jesus as King means:

Obedience - Doing what God says even when it's inconvenient or hurts

Allegiance - Choosing faithfulness over approval

Trust - Believing Jesus reigns even when the future feels uncertain

Discuss: Which of these three (obedience, allegiance, trust) is most challenging for you right now?

Practical Application (15 minutes)

Individual Reflection:

Take 2-3 minutes of silence for each person to answer these questions personally:

What is currently competing for the throne of my heart?

In what area of my life do I need to surrender control to Jesus as King?

What would it look like practically to crown Jesus as King in that area?

Group Sharing:

Share one practical step you'll take this week to surrender more fully to Jesus as King

How can the group pray for you or support you?

31 Days of Prayer & Fasting:

Who is committing to the 31 days of prayer and fasting starting January 1st?

Text "31 DAYS" to 833-800-6667 to receive daily prayer prompts

Discuss: What type of fast might you participate in? (food, social media, entertainment, etc.)

Bible Reading Challenge:

Who will commit to reading through the Bible in 2026?

Share what Bible reading plan or method you'll use

Consider pairing up for accountability

Prayer Time (10 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

Pray for each person's specific area where they need to surrender to Jesus as King

Pray for preparation for the 31 days of prayer and fasting

Pray for commitment to God's Word in 2026

Pray for strength to face opposition as followers of Jesus

Suggested Prayer Format:

Break into groups of 2-3

Each person shares their prayer request

Pray specifically for one another

Closing Thought

"My friends, God chooses humble means and humble people to do significant things. As we head into a new year, I want to invite you to surrender to this king. He is the only one worthy of surrender."

Before Next Week

Text "31 DAYS" to 833-800-6667

Pick up a paper Bible reading plan from the church lobby

Journal about what throne you're surrendering to Jesus

Begin preparing your heart for the prayer and fasting season

Additional Resources

Sermon Series: "First Things First" begins January 1st

Daily Prayer Notifications: Starting January 1st at 6:00 AM

Next Steps Room: Available for anyone wanting to discuss faith decisions or next steps

5-Day Devotional: Surrendering to the King Who Reigns Forever

Day 1: When Jesus is King, He Will Be Opposed

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Devotional: The Magi traveled far to worship the newborn King, but their arrival threatened Herod's throne. Today, Jesus still threatens every throne we try to build for ourselves—thrones of control, comfort, reputation, or security. Like Herod, we can respond with resistance, or like the Magi, we can journey toward worship. The presence of Jesus exposes what we value most. Are you protecting your own kingdom, or are you surrendering to His? Psalm 14:1 reminds us that living as if God doesn't exist is foolishness. This week, examine what competes for Jesus' rightful place in your heart. True wisdom begins when we recognize His authority over every area of our lives and choose to bow before Him.

Day 2: When Jesus is Our King, We Will Be Opposed

Reading: John 15:18-25

Devotional: Jesus warned His followers: "If the world hated me, it will hate you also." To be a Christian—a Christ-follower—means more than adopting religious preferences; it means looking like Jesus, loving like Jesus, and standing on truth like Jesus. This inevitably brings opposition. Perhaps you've felt pressure to compromise at work, faced ridicule from family, or experienced rejection for your faith. Remember, you're not alone. Joseph protected Jesus from Herod's murderous rage by obeying God's direction. When opposition comes, stay rooted in God's Word. Don't bend truth to please others. Your primary audience is God, not people. Following Jesus may cost you comfort, approval, or relationships, but it gains you eternity with the King who reigns forever.

Day 3: Hearing from God to Lead Well

Reading: Psalm 119:105-112

Devotional: Four times in Matthew 2, God spoke to Joseph in dreams, directing him to protect Jesus and lead his family according to divine guidance. Joseph's immediate obedience saved the Messiah's life. But how do we hear from God today? God has given us His complete revelation in Scripture—His love letter, His instruction manual, His voice to us. When we open the Bible, we hear from God. When we study it, He directs us. Husbands and fathers, are you leading your family according to God's Word? Are you listening so you can hear? This year, commit to reading Scripture daily. Download a Bible app, grab a reading plan, or listen to God's Word audibly. You cannot lead where God directs if you're not listening to His voice through His Word.

Day 4: Humility and God's Surprising Choices

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Devotional: God doesn't choose people based on credentials, wealth, or reputation. He chose elderly Abraham and Sarah, stuttering Moses, young David, outcast shepherds, and blue-collar fishermen. Jesus Himself was born in a stable and raised in insignificant Nazareth—a place people mocked. Why? Because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). He chooses those who need Him most, not those who think they have the most to offer. Perhaps you feel inadequate, overlooked, or insignificant. Good. That's exactly where God works best. Stop relying on your own strength and surrender to His. God takes humble means and humble people to accomplish eternal purposes. Your weakness is the canvas for His glory.

Day 5: The King Who Reigns Forever

Reading: Revelation 19:11-16

Devotional: Herod the Great built monuments, palaces, and mountains to immortalize his name. Today, they're ruins. "After Herod died," Matthew writes—a reminder that every earthly throne crumbles. But Jesus, born in a manger, reigns forever. Celebrities die.

Leaders pass. Our own lives will end. But the King who entered our world as a baby will reign eternally. As you step into 2026, what are you building—temporary monuments to yourself or an eternal inheritance in Christ? Surrendering to Jesus as King requires three commitments: obedience (doing what He says), allegiance (choosing faithfulness over approval), and trust (believing He reigns even in uncertainty). Stop negotiating with Jesus. Crown Him King—not just in words, but in how you live, obey, and trust Him completely.