

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday December 9, 2019. "Stop Hating: Love".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap.

Sunday was our second in the Advent series, and just the thought of Christmas rapidly approaching can cause some distress. But Advent is a season, a time, of waiting, of expectation, of knowing that God cares for us and the coming of The Christ will give us insight, (not always...or let's say rarely answers), but a revealing of the heart of God. The coming of The Christ, the promise of a sign of God's love for us, will give us perspective and understanding that will help us where we are.

Last week we talked about the gift of hope, and it's ability to cover AND remove shame that society, our past tries to lay on us. Yes, we ALL have made some unwise choices in our past, we may still be paying the price, suffering the consequences of those choices, but we are not defined by our past mistakes. We are not the worst things we've done. Hope tells us **the coming of The Christ promises to remove that shame and to call us worthy, loveable, and belonging.**

A quick question to start you thinking.

How does the message of the removal of shame help us, you, move towards a hopeful expectation to Christmas and an understanding of the coming of The Christ?

C. Sunday's Message.

Sunday Pastor Lamar told us, in addition to other things which we'll talk about later, about how Herod reacted to the story of the coming Messiah, and the power of hate to consume who we are if we're not careful. Herod was so consumed with himself, and had allowed this dark side of him to grow unchecked, it manifested itself in such a horrific way when he felt threatened.

First let's talk about hate itself. Pastor Lamar gave us these two quotes.

"Hatred cannot be defined, it can only be described".

"Hatred often begins in a situation where there is contact without fellowship".

What do these mean to you?

How do you understand or see hate flourishing from the truth in these quotes?

D. Scripture.

The passage used Sunday morning was from the Gospel of **Luke 1:68-71**. It is Zechariah's song when he found out he was going to be a father. Read it and then we'll look at it some.

Zechariah was the father of John the Baptist...or Baptiser more correctly. And little did Zechariah know what God was unleashing in this double movement act of his son John, and Jesus coming into the world. The hope of all creation.

Let's talk about Herod a bit, and then we'll look at the passage.

Herod was a puppet king, of the Roman Empire. He wasn't Jewish and was hated by the Jews for imposing Roman law on their nation. This is what imperialist/invading nations do. They conquer another weaker nation, and then begin to impose...force at the tip of a spear, their own culture, rules, and religion on this conquered nation. It's what a more powerful country does when it occupies another simply for its own interests. And often this invading nation will place into positions of power people who seem to represent the invaded country, but rather it protects the interests of the occupying nation. We still see this all around the world today.

All of that to say the Jewish people hate Herod and he hated them. Hate grew all around. Herod channeled his hatred for these people he felt superior to into controlling them. He had mostly unlimited power, as long as it didn't conflict with the interests of Rome, and so he ruled by impulse and ruthless control.

Where do you see this type of hatred, abuse of power, attempts at control today?

How does that add to an overall culture, world bent towards hatred?

How is it affecting people on a personal level?

Zechariah, in his song, speaks of a coming one, The Christ, who would live among the people on the margins, those who are oppressed by the powers to be, and address these systems and institution of power. ***“Salvation from our enemies and those who hate us”***. Such powerful and empowering words.

So let's really dive into it finally.

What did; *“God has come to redeem, rescue, his people”*, mean to the Jews?

How would they have heard it considering their situation?

And what does it say to us today?

How do we view our role, purpose, as people of Jesus, in being a force to rescue and redeem others from their enemies and those who hate us?

Bottom line- hate is a 'throne', control issue.

Hate is birthed, nurtured, when we feel like we are owed, we deserve, someone is threatening our....whatever, and so we draw lines and make us the worthy ones and anyone that even appears to threaten our control, stuff, place, position, etc. our enemy, (Yes...Herod wrestled with all of these very specifically).

However, should examine how we feel threatened, and hate can grow within us in the very same way it did Herod. Just like Herod, we hear something, about someone, or how some 'others' threaten what we think we rightfully have earned. Herod actually believed he earned his position as king of Israel, but it was just assigned to him. And because of that perceived threat Herod acted out of the fear of losing what was rightfully his. We too allow hatred, judgment, even prejudice grow within us, justifying our rights over someone else's.

And as Lamar said, we allow this perceived position of rightful ownership to create within us contempt for those who we feel threaten our status or position.

And **the only answer to this seed of hatred that grows within us is love**...the love that grows when we realize we are all in this together and we all live in community. **We are to Be love to and for each other.**

So...the final question; **How can/will you be aware of any growing hatred within you and how can you BE love for others?**