

Title: “The Way of Power (Herod) Versus the Way of Sacrifice (Jesus)”

August 19, 2018 Pastor Dave Sattler Series: The Jesus Way

Texts: Matthew 2:1-18; cf. John 13:4-5, 12-15; Philippians 2:5-7; Mark 10:43-45.

Sources: NIV Life Application Bible. Commentaries: David Garland & Gary Thielman. Books: “The Jesus Way” by Eugene Peterson, “The Heavenly Man” by Brother Yun & Paul Hattaway, “A Visual Guide to Biblical Events” by John A Beck. Online: Wikipedia, “Herod the Great,” Blue Letter Bible, “The Herods.” Israel Trip, October 2013; My notes and photos based on teachings by John A Beck.

I. Review & Introduction:

- <Slide> Good morning, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC today continuing our Summer Series, “The Jesus Way.” We’ve looked at several Bible characters – Abraham, Jacob, Esther, Isaiah, to name a few, and taken lessons from their lives on the Jesus Way of living.
- When Jesus says, “I AM the Way, the Truth, & the Life” (John 14:6), what’s He really mean? In Acts, when Luke refers to members of the early church as followers of “the Way,” what’s he getting at? Most certainly, the “Jesus-Way” is the way to heaven, but, is it also more than that?
- ILL — Years ago I was struck by a sermon ...
 - I heard by the now-late Mike Yaconelli. His big idea?
 - Q: “Following Jesus will ruin your life.” Emphasis on “your.”
- <Slide> To embrace the Jesus-Way is not simply to syncretize His ways with the norms and values of our culture.
- Not merely a path we walk on occasionally, the Jesus-Way is meant to be the radical nucleus from which all life-decisions emanate.
- Relationships — who we give our hearts to, career — what we give our time to, words — what we say to people, decisions — why we do what we do ... all of life flows, or, ought to flow, from our commitment to following Jesus.
- Truthfully, for me this is a huge wrestle ... because, sadly, it is impossible to follow Jesus solely on my own terms.
- Not just an ‘add-on’ to our already-busy lives, following Jesus is not like a hobby or a gym pass or the coffee shop we frequent.
- Jesus’ call to “follow” does not imply I put my trust in Him and my bank account, Jesus and my toys, my comforts, my recreations, Jesus and conventional wisdom, or Jesus and my favourite ... anything.
- When we allow our urges or the culture around us, not Jesus, to dictate how we go about our lives, we end up trapped in our drivenness, anxious when it doesn’t feel like we measure up, and miserable to be around.
- <Slide> Please turn now to Matthew 2:1-18, p.783-84 in the blue Bibles in the seat rack in front of you. Or, turn there now on your electronic device. “The Way of Power Versus the Way of Sacrifice”; the contrasting stories of Jesus & Herod. It’ll be Christmas here in August!

- **<Slide>** One didn't, and surprisingly still doesn't have to go far in the tiny nation of Israel to see the mighty influence of the Herods.
- Three Herods figure prominently during the life of Christ.
 - Herod the Great's in power at the time of Jesus' birth. He dies within a year or two.
 - Two of his sons, Archelaus and Antipas reign in Jesus' lifetime.
 - ☒ Antipas rules Galilee during the time of Jesus' public ministry.
 - ☒ And, along with Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas presides at the trial of Jesus prior to His crucifixion.
- **<READ> <PRAY>** 'Lord, move me out of the way. Come now and speak to us by Your Spirit. Help us to understand, embrace, live the Jesus-Way. We're hungry to hear from You.'

II. Text Outline:

1. **<Slide> King of the Jews (2:2-3)**

- Ruling Palestine for 34 years, the landscape still bears the effects, the immensity, and the sheer beauty of Herod the Great's many building projects:
 - Seven palaces, all larger than any the Caesars had in Rome.
 - Enormous aqueducts, architectural and engineering marvels.
 - And, the 'crown jewel,' a massive, opulent renovation of the Jewish people's precious temple in Jerusalem.
 - Herod's vision, in his own words, Q: "To have a capital ... worthy of [my] dignity and grandeur." – Wikipedia, Herod the Great.
- He built to impress.
- Yet it wasn't working. His decadence won him no favours.
- You see, Herod came from mixed lineage. His father an Edomite, his mother an Arabian, Herod was raised in the Jewish tradition, but not born a Jew.
- Considered a 'usurper' by the Jews and, by Rome, a 'puppet' put in place to do their dirty work in the 'back-water' of Palestine, Herod longed for the title of "King."
- Never getting the 'heart' of the people, Herod grasped for it by abusing power.
- This obsession dominated Herod's life and defines his legacy.
- "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" Magi from the east asked (2). Always looking over his shoulder, when skittish King Herod heard this inquiry, "he was disturbed." (3)
- Rival kings always disturb societies' power structures.

2. **<Slide> Out of Bethlehem (2:5-6)**

- ILL — Herodium was perhaps Herod's most lavish palace.
 - Built by back-breaking slave labour and funded through his outrageous tax grab of 50% of the peoples' incomes, this was also to

be Herod's luxurious mausoleum. His final resting place. Where he was buried within a couple of years of Jesus' birth.

- o In construction, Herod loved to showcase his dominance over nature. Here, he literally had one mountain shaved off and piled on top of another, to elevate it, make it more prominent and visible.
— John A Beck/Peterson
- o Strategically-located, Herodium is seeable even from Jerusalem 12km away. And it's just 5km from the birthplace of Jesus, that little town of Bethlehem. Herod wanted it that way.
- “But you, Bethlehem, ... are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” (6) Micah, the prophet wrote about the coming birth of Christ.

3. <Slide> Fake Worship (2:8)

- Masking his royal paranoia, Herod attempts to use the Magi to ‘sniff out’ this rival king. Under the guise of “worship,” he says, “As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” (8)
- Sadly, worship was the thing Herod craved most. For himself.
- ILL — Not long after this, Herod the Great was on his deathbed.
 - o Fearing only celebration upon his passing, story's told ...
 - o Of Herod asking his confidantes to round up a large group of distinguished men from all over Palestine. His order?
 - o Execute them all at the time of his death, so that there would be much mourning in the land ... and the displays of grief he so longed for, would actually take place. — Josephus in Beck
- Thankfully there's no record of this wish ever being carried out.

4. <Slide> Massacre of the Innocents (2:16-18)

- “Furious” at being “outwitted” by the Magi, who had been re-routed by a dream, Herod powers up. He orders, “Kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity ... two years old and under.” (16)
- Inconceivable response if it weren't for what we know of Herod.
- Prior to this, Herod had ordered the death of his favourite wife (he had 10), her mother, two of her sons, and his own eldest son.
- All out of mad concern for securing his throne.
- These ruthless acts prompted Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, to famously state, Q: “It would be safer to be Herod's pig than his son.” — Caesar in Peterson

III. Application:

- Time to ‘land the plane’ on the sermon with a few application points.

- No better place to look than to Jesus, and the beauty and profundity of His Way. With Jesus, **the way up is the way down**, the road of sacrifice.
 - This is the wonderful, powerfully-disarming God of the Christian Story.
 - Now, what's this Jesus-Way all about?
- 1. <Slide> Being Willing to do the Dirty Jobs (Cf. John 13:4-5/12-15)**
- ILL — There were no automobiles in the ancient world, no public transport.
 - Only the rich had animals or chariots to ride.
 - Most everyone walked places. And, if you've ever been to the Middle East, you know hot and dry and dusty it gets.
 - The ancients had leather sandals, and one can only imagine how, after a long day's walk, feet must have felt — or, smelt.
 - Average people didn't bathe often (water was scarce in the biblical lands, still is), but foot-washing was a regular necessity.
 - And it was a dirty job reserved for servants and slaves, the lowly.
 - <Slide> Cf. John 13:4-5, "So [Jesus] got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist ... and began to wash his disciples' feet. 12 When he had finished..., he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' [Jesus] asked them. 13 'You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have **washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet**. 15 I have set you an example.'"
 - 1-dayer's, weeklong to conferences, even multi-week missions trips.
 - When it pulled into the church parking lot at the end, all the youth and leaders wanted to do was pile off that bus soon as possible.
 - But it had to be cleaned. And, after long trips, you can imagine what that was like ... dirty garbage, sticky candy, rivers of Slurpee.
 - And there was certainly no glory in that work. No one saw you. Once, a bus driver even drive away with one of our people under the seats on the filthy bus floor trying to clean the last bit of mess!
 - "Cleaning the bus" became a metaphor for the Jesus-Way.
 - <Slide> APP — One of the things I love most about Jesus is that He's no 'ivory palace princess!' Unlike Herod, Jesus has nothing to prove. No task is too small for Him. He's not too big or too important for anything or anyone.
 - With Jesus, the way up's the way down. If the God of the universe saw fit to get down on His knees and wash His disciples' dirty feet, so should we. May we be willing to do the dirty jobs no one else sees or wants to do, but need to be done in Jesus' name.

2. <Slide> Laying Aside Our Rights (Cf. Philippians 2:5-7)

- In Cf. Philippians 2:5-7, Paul says, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, **he made himself nothing** by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”
- What it took for Jesus to take on humanity doesn’t get enough press, in my opinion.
- In Love’s Most Powerful Display, Jesus, fully God, left behind all the glories of heaven to come to earth to be one of us, to feel the full effects of being human.
- In stark contrast to Herod, Jesus refused to exploit the privilege of His deity, giving up that right to become “servant.”
- <Slide> To say He gave up a lot is an gross understatement.
- One commentator says this is the antithesis of the human drive to dominate. Jesus’ life, Q: “became a matter not of getting but of giving, not of being served but of serving, not of dominance but of obedience.” – Thielman, p.129
- ILL — A legend exists in Sattler history. So obviously mythical.
 - But story’s told of how, in the spring of 1972, as a young three-year-old, I complained of a sore ankle and refused to walk for weeks.
 - My parents finally took me to a doctor who found nothing wrong with me. But I continued to crawl and whine wherever I went.
 - You see, in March of that year, my little sister had been born.
 - I was apparently so attention-starved, I was willing to use any tactic necessary to maintain my dominance of the family landscape, or at least to keep myself squarely on my parents’ radar.
- <Slide> APP — This urge for others to meet our needs is part of the broken human condition ...
- Infants cry, toddlers feign injury, teenagers beg their parents for the latest electronics, adults ‘work the system’ ... demand the best education, the highest-paying jobs, the most comfortable homes, the most extravagant vacations. We all seem willing to go to considerable trouble to have our needs met. To get ahead. Even at the expense of others.
- But, I assure you, this is not the Jesus-Way.
- These urges have to be restrained or people and communities self-destruct.
- We must allow Jesus to transform our thinking:
 - It’s not, ‘I can cheat on this school test or business deal, because I deserve better.’
 - It’s not thinking, ‘I can spend all day binging on Netflix/watching sports/working out, because it’s my time.’

- o It's not believing, 'I can express myself sexually however I want, because it's my body.'
- o Not, 'I can spend all my money on myself because it's all mine.'
- No! The Jesus-Way is not clinging to my rights, but submitting to the way and values of Jesus.
- With Jesus, the way up's the way down. If the Son of God was even willing to lay aside His rights for the good of others, so should we. This is the path to freedom. True joy comes in 'laying it down.'

3. <Slide> Giving Up One's Life to God & Others (Cf. Mark 10:43-45)

- After hanging around with Jesus for a couple of years, James and John one day hit Him up for positions of authority ... at His right and at His left.
- Shameless self-promoters!
- Truthfully though, when we look at James and John, we see ourselves in the mirror. Somewhat calmly, Jesus responds, 43 "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and **to give his life** as a ransom for many."
- <Slide> ILL — I've just finished the stirring autobiography of Brother Yun,
 - o A great man, one of China's most courageous house church leaders.
 - o Seen as a rebel, in the 80's & 90's, he was imprisoned and tortured repeatedly by government authorities. However, Brother Yun continued his ministry while in prison, with powerful results.
 - o Many prisoners and even some prison officials became Christians.
 - o One day, after many years of suffering severely, Brother Yun miraculously escaped from a maximum security prison!
 - o The Holy Spirit told him to simply walk out. Brother Yun states it was as if he had become 'invisible' to the prison guards who stared straight through him as he walked right on by!
 - o The official investigation by the Chinese Government concluded that he received no human help in his escape.
 - o <Slide> Having suffered much for following Jesus, Brother Yun issues a somewhat-scathing challenge, Q: "Multitudes of church members in the West are satisfied with giving their minimum to God, not their maximum. This type of attitude will never do! Jesus gave his whole life for us, and we give as little of our lives, time and money as we can back to God. [We must] Repent!
— The Heavenly Man, p.297

- Jesus' life and teaching flips the world's understanding of greatness on its head. The greatest work ever done was by One Who gave up His life for others. The Jesus-Way is the way of sacrifice.
- **<Slide>** ILL — One can hardly get close today ...
 - To the spot that marks the traditional birthplace of Jesus.
 - It's a small cave near the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem packed with thousands of tourists and pilgrims ... arriving by the busload day after day, year after year.
 - Much more remains of Herodium, the monumental palace where Herod the Great is buried. Yet its visitors are few.
 - Throughout his life, Herod used all the tyrannical authority he could muster to try and win the title, "King of the Jews."
 - In a sweet twist of irony, with Herod's son, Antipas no doubt looking on, Pilate had a sign fastened to the cross above Jesus' head. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." — cf. John 19:19.
 - Mockery, sure? But, here we also see, in bold contrast, two conflicting ways of living: the title Herod fought for, Jesus died for.
- **<Slide>** APP — Here's the point: Power gained via human appointment or self-aggrandizement is always fleeting and not real power at all.
- Only God's appointments ever last or truly satisfy.
- So, how will the Jesus-Way impact ... your Monday morning school assignment? Tonight's end-of-the-weekend Instagram post? Tomorrow's coffee with that person you hope might become your friend or client? Or that work presentation you've spent a ton of time perfecting?
- The worst leaders feel the need to constantly remind others who's boss.
- Not merely talking, Jesus backed up His words, by sacrificing His life as a "ransom." To graciously set us free from sin and darkness.
- **<Slide>** Eugene Peterson writes, Q: "The ways Jesus goes about loving and saving the world are personal: nothing disembodied, nothing abstract, nothing impersonal. Incarnate, flesh and blood, relational, particular, local." — The Jesus Way, p. 1.
- On earth, Jesus largely ignored the world of power on display all around Him.
- He hardly gave Herod the time of day! Instead, Jesus chose the margins of society — to work with the unimportant, the weak, the powerless. That's how He started a movement, a revolution to bring the Kingdom of God alive.
- With Jesus, the way up's the way down. Greatness isn't measured by gaining high position or via exceptional personal achievement kicking others down to get there. Rather, greatness is 'won' through sacrifice, service — and often suffering. This is the Jesus-Way. Oh Lord, grant us courage and strength to make the Jesus-Way our way. Amen.