

The Shepherds and The Kings (The 4th Sunday in Advent)

A. Intro: Crossroads where everything changes.

Our Advent Series in Summary

1 st Sunday:	PROPHECY	(Waiting)
2 nd Sunday:	BETHLEHEM	(Weakness)
3 rd Sunday:	ANGELS	(Wonder)
4 th Sunday:	SHEPHERDS	(Witness)
Christmas:	CHRIST	(The Word of God)

B. When we receive Jesus, we are called to new life paths.

• **New Paths of Faith**

Luke 2:15-16 *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.*

• **New Paths of Witness & Conversation**

Luke 2:17-18 *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.*

• **New Paths of Worship**

Luke 2:19-20 *But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

C. When we reject Jesus, we become mired in greater and greater evil.

King Herod: From Insecurity to Jealousy to Murder

- **Matthew 2:1-5 (ESV)** ¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea..."
- **Matthew 2:7-12 (ESV)** ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.
- **Matthew 2:13-16 (ESV)** ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

D. Reflection Questions

1. Describe a time in your childhood when your path suddenly shifted. Which did you choose and why?
2. How has meeting Jesus changed your path through life?
3. Who has been affected by Jesus' witness through your words and actions? How so?
4. Take a field trip to a quiet natural area and spend an uninterrupted hour in prayer, praise, and reflection with God. Journal your thoughts and be prepared to share with someone significant in your life.
5. Are you more like Mary or the shepherds in your usual worship style? Why so?
6. What risks, spiritual conversations, and worship is God calling you to try in this next month? Ask another person to hold you accountable for any steps to which you commit.