

UNBELIEVABLE!

... an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." Luke 2:13 NIV

If King Herod had had his way baby Jesus would not have lived past his second birthday and we would never have a Christmas to celebrate. Herod didn't want another "king" threatening his throne ... baby or not! Beginning with Cain's murder of his brother Abel, our human history is replete with murder as a solution for removing people who "inconvenience" our own lives. We are, by nature, quite selfish, placing our desires and perceived needs above everyone else around us. In short we don't want any other king except ourselves over us . . . or "You're not the boss of me!"

Nowhere is this more evident than with the issue of abortion, an undeniably evil practice of murdering the most defenseless among us simply because we find their very existence inconvenient to us. One could ask, "Can there be anything more evil than a mother extinguishing the life of her own child?" and I would have to agree that this deepest human bond being turned inside out is certainly a sign that we are in a time when we as a people have descended to the very deepest bowels of evil and hatred possible.

I am not alone in this assessment as a friend of mine recently approached me with a comment and question. Though he is not a Christian or Bible believer he also is incredulous over the whole abortion topic. Reading that the Pope had recently told priests that they could pronounce absolution (forgive people) for abortion, my friend said to me, "Unbelievable! How could anyone ever forgive abortion?!"

He was quite taken aback by my reply. I told him that, in fact, forgiveness for the sin of abortion HAD to be forgivable; for it spoke to the very heart of the gospel (a word meaning "good news" from God). The "good news" of the forgiveness of sin ... ALL sin, no matter how "small" or how "great" is for ALL people, because all people sin.

Sin means "missing the mark" of perfection. An honest look around will confirm that no one ever born of human mother and father has ever landed a bullseye on perfection. As such, we all suffer from broken human relationships which result in varying degrees of selfishness, hurt, pain, and death in our world. Even more we have been separated from our perfect and loving Creator. From the smallest infraction to the greatest abhorrence we are all guilty of saying to God, "I don't want you to be my King!" and thus all of us find ourselves hopelessly OUTSIDE of His perfect, gracious, and loving kingdom.

This hopeless tragedy so grieved God that He was compelled to do something about it. He could not leave us locked outside of His Kingdom of Life and Love, so He did what was only possible for Him to do; He arranged to personally "pay" for our rebellion and make it possible for us to be reunited to each other, to Him, and to Life in Him.

Which brings us back to our story in Luke. Evil eventually and always desires murder ... and King Herod was a very evil man. But as strong as death and evil are in this world, the Holy God of Life, mercy, and love is stronger. Baby Jesus was spared from death that day because His Father had a plan for Him and for the increase of His Kingdom which this Herod nor his subsequent son would never be able to fathom. Death WOULD come for Jesus, but only on His terms and the time of His choosing. But first Jesus would live a human life that DID hit the bullseye of perfection while preaching the gospel of forgiveness and life in His Kingdom. In this way, His life would be ready as a perfect and acceptable sacrifice and payment for all of our sin. He would be coronated with a blood-soaked crown of thorns and with the weight of every last one of all of our sins, from the least to the greatest. This is the glory that all the company of angels sang of to the shepherds on the occasion of his birth in Bethlehem.

This is the same glorious gospel that Jesus wishes every sinner to hear and to take to heart. Whatever evil you or I have done (and we all HAVE done evil) Jesus has paid for on that old rugged cross.

From snapping at one you love to murdering one you SHOULD love, Jesus has paid for it. And He wants you to receive that forgiveness. Are you truly sorry for your hurt against another? Do you wish to be different? Do you believe that Jesus' has the authority and power to forgive you and, in fact, give you a new birth as someone holy and alive instead of evil and dead? Then you are not only forgivable, but, in fact, completely forgiven!

Unbelievable? No; it's the gospel truth of Christmas.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." Acts 2:13-

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