

12.08.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “The First Christmas - The Politics”

Scripture Reading: [Luke 2:1-5](#); [Matthew 2:1-7](#); [13-18](#)

Reflection: Pastor Henry

The first Christmas story is a story of contrasts. Matthew and Luke, in their written accounts of the first Christmas, highlight for us these contrasts. This week, we are focusing our attention on the contrast in power within the Christmas story.

On the one side, there is Caesar (the Roman emperor), Quirinus (the governor of Syria), and King Herod (the regional client king of Judea). Three leaders who represent the totality of Rome’s power on a national, regional, and local level. Three leaders who built and lived in palaces of earthly privilege and who hid away in mighty fortresses. Three leaders who all too often used their power and influence to suppress, intimidate, threaten, terrorize, murder, and subjugate those around them into submission in order to both serve themselves and to maintain their power and control.

On the other side, there is a baby. A baby who is born not in a palace or place of earthly privilege, but rather where the animals are kept. A baby who is born in a small town, amidst common people. A baby who is born with a different type of power. A baby whose power is not in what he can make others do for him, but rather in what he is able to do for them ([Isaiah 53](#); [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)). A baby whose power is not in what he can dish out, but rather in what he is able to take away ([John 1:29-34](#)). A baby whose power is not in the ability to end someone’s life, but rather to give someone life ([John 10:1-21](#)). A baby whose power is discovered and demonstrated in and through things such as humility, sacrifice, and unconditional love ([Philippians 2:1-11](#), [Galatians 1:1-5](#); [1 John 4:7-21](#)).

As you reflect on the power of Rome and how it operates and the power of the Christ child and the kingdom he came to bring, what other differences do you notice?

The Christmas story presents us with two types of power. The question is, which type of power do we want? Which of these powers and kingdoms do we long for? Which of these powers are we going to come and worship and adore in our lives? The power and kingdom of “Rome” or the power and kingdom of the newborn King?

Listen again to how Pastor Doug ended his sermon for us this past Sunday. “Scripture, the Gospel, God, and his Son Jesus, offer us and the world a clear choice. Choose the Roman Empire (the world and all the pleasures and enticements it offers) that now lies in shambles OR choose Jesus’ kingdom – a kingdom born in a humble home in Bethlehem that is still growing and will stand forever. Your choice. You can’t have both – it is one or the other. You do need to choose. Choose well. Choose now. Your soul and your eternity depend on it.”

Prayer:

God of salvation, in Christ you have done great and powerful things— our hearts are filled with joy. By your

power, you lifted us out of the wasteland of sin and brought us with joy and laughter into your kingdom. Salvation is your gift to us. But we confess that often we try to replace your gift with our own efforts. We try to complete what is already perfect; we try to add to what is already full; we try to earn what we already have. Forgive us for our foolishness. Help us to focus on your grace. Help us to live grateful lives in return. For Jesus' sake alone, AMEN. —based on Psalm 126

Songs for today:

[O Come All Ye Faithful](#)

[Angels From the Realms of Glory](#)

[The First Noel](#)