

Herod thinking would kill the Christ

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

The celebration of the appearing of the Christ has passed. Now it seems history is repeating itself, and the Herod-thought is threatening to engulf us in selfish actions, petty jealousies and revenge. Who was Herod? Herod was the Rome-appointed king of Judea and Galilee at the time of Jesus' birth. He was not a Roman but an Idumean, descended from the Edomites or sons of Esau. Brilliant and cunning, he consolidated his power through military victory, bribery of Antony (Antony and Cleopatra fame), and duplicity. He pretended to be a friend of the Jews by protecting their Temple at Jerusalem from invading Romans and organizing an ambitious building project to refurbish it.

But this did not mean Herod was anyone's friend. His motives were personal, self-promoting. Selfish thinking led to jealousy and eventually paranoia. At first he relished making enemies and accepted it as a natural result of wielding power. But soon he saw an enemy behind every face. He imagined his wife, Mariamne I, had betrayed him and killed her in a rage. She was innocent. When his two sons by her discovered this villainy, he had them killed.

This is self-righteousness carried to the extreme. Blind to reason and deaf to protests of innocence, Herod-thinking holds on to itself as the only truth. How sad. Herod missed seeing the Christ because of this. When the wise men informed him the Christ was come, Herod did not rejoice. Instead he saw a challenge to his authority. God's truth overshadowed his attempt to impose human will.

When Herod realized that the wise men (perhaps how they earned that title) were not coming back to tell him where the Messiah or King of the Jews was born, he ordered all infants two years and younger to be killed.

This is the Herod-thought: brilliance and ability twisted by jealousy, revenge, and selfishness. The Herod-thought justifies temper, self-righteousness and evil as a means to success. The Herod-thought is full of suspicion and distrust, and over-reacts to supposed affronts. Since Herod

could not be trusted, he could not trust anyone else. Thus the Herod-thought eventually ends up alone, paranoid, a victim of its own treachery.

How do we combat the Herod-thought and protect ourselves and others? As the wise men did, through prayer to God and a willingness to listen and obey God's directions. God sends specific thoughts, God-thoughts, to each one. ANYONE who quiets their own will long enough to listen, will hear God's plan for their safety and protection. Even those who have given in to the Herod-thought in the past can change their mind, think and act humbly, be willing to let God be the authority, and be wise men and women.

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