



REFLECTION GUIDE AND MESSAGE NOTES

CHRISTMAS CONSPIRACY (Part 4)

The Fingerprints of God

St. Mark's Church

December 23 & 24, 2011

Connect

1. What words most accurately describe the rhythm of your life this Christmas season? Do these words fall more into the category of "peaceful, focused, and centered" or into the realm of "disturbed, distracted, and scattered?"
2. How has the pace and focus of your life hindered or helped your relationships with others? How has your relationship with God been affected?
3. Have you ever been in awe; utterly amazed by the Bible's account of the invisible, intangible God making Himself visible and tangible in Jesus?

Engage

1. *Read Matthew 2:1-14.*
 - *Have you ever considered the political and cultural climate into which Jesus was born and the fact that Herod was a power-hungry, ruthless, and hateful king?*
 - *Why do you believe Matthew is deliberate to tell us about King Herod's anger, suspicion, and paranoia? Is it possible that his motive was so we would know that if Jesus could be born into a world of unthinkable evil and suffering...that maybe God's not turned off by or given up on our screwed up world?*
2. *The Bible says, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets many times and in many different ways. But now in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son. Jesus was the exact replica of the Father" (Hebrews 1:1-3).*
 - *Ponder the meaning of these words for a few moments. Jesus Christ is the Son of God! Consider what that means to God. Consider what that means to you. Notice what God has done through Jesus (spoken, created, sustained and saved). List*

some of the ways you have personally benefitted from the things Jesus accomplished.

3. *Read the following words several times: "God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him" (Romans 5:8).*
 - *Now repeat them slowly, personalizing them: "God put his love on the line for 'me' by offering his Son in sacrificial death while 'I' was of no use whatever to him."*
 - *Can you understand why? Would you die for someone? Would you willingly take the punishment someone else deserved?*
 - *If you fully absorbed the reality that Jesus not only "offered" to die for you, but He actually did, would you not be in constant awe?*

Apply

1. **Make a plan to spend some time within the next few days pondering the following portrayal of Jesus:**

Jesus Christ is "no run-of-the-mill messiah. His story was extraordinary. He called himself divine, yet allowed a minimum wage Roman soldier to drive a nail into his wrist. He demanded purity, yet stood for the rights of a repentant whore..."

"Has it been a while since you have seen him? If your prayers seem stale, it probably has. If your faith seems to be trembling, perhaps your vision of his has blurred. If you can't find power to face your problems, perhaps its time to face him."

"One warning. Something happens to a person who has witnessed His Majesty. He becomes addicted. One glimpse of the King and you are consumed by a desire to see more of Him and say more about him. Pew-warming is no longer an option. Junk religion will no longer suffice. Sensation-seeking is needless. One you have seen his face you will forever long to see it again" (Quote from Max Lucado).

- **Now...write a letter to Jesus, expressing what you think and feel.**



MESSAGE NOTES

CHRISTMAS EVE CHRISTMAS CONSPIRACY (Part 4)

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Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea when Herod was king.

Matthew 2: 1 (GW)

When Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this, he was troubled ...

Matthew 2: 1-3 (NCV)

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, as well as all the people in Jerusalem.

Matthew 2: 3 (NCV)

Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote ...

Matthew 2: 4-5 (CEV)

After they (magi) left, an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, because Herod is starting to look for the child so he can kill him. Stay in Egypt until I tell you to return." So Joseph got up and left for Egypt during the night with the child and his mother.

Matthew 2: 13-14 (NCV)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and desolate ... everything was covered in total darkness.

Genesis 1: 1-2 (TEV)

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets many times and in many different ways. But now in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son. Jesus was the exact replica of the Father.

Hebrews 1: 1-3 (NCV)

God put his love on the line for us by offering his Son in sacrificial death while we were of no use whatever to him.

Romans 5: 8 (The Message)

Jesus said, **"I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark."**

John 8: 12 (CEV)

Scripture Translation Guide
(NIV) New International Version
(NLT) New Living Translation
(NCV) New Century Version
(TEV) Today's English Version
(CEV) Contemporary English Version
(GW) God's Word
(AMP) Amplified Version
(JBP) JB Philips
(LB) Living Bible
(MSG) The Message