

“Good News... Bad News”
Matthew 2:13-23
12/28/2025
(Show Title Slide)

Merry Christmas!
We are still in the Christmas Season
It's 12 days long and goes all the way to January 6
The Day of Epiphany

On this first Sunday after Christmas,
I have some Good News...
And I have some bad news

Our Savior has been born!
And, then we have the *Massacre of the Innocents*,
Every little boy who was two years old and younger,
Was slaughtered by a pathological, paranoid, homicidal king

First, the Good News...
(Show Shepherds Slide)
If you remember,
the angel told the shepherds outside of Bethlehem
"Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. ¹¹Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord.
— Luke 2:10

And the great assembly of angels join in the celebration,
¹⁴"Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."
— Luke 2:14

Our Savior has come!
We will be saved!
Glory to God!
Rejoice!!

Great News!

But there is also bad news...
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On Epiphany Sunday,
We will hear about the wise men who came from the east
Searching for this newborn king of Jews

You know the song, right?

But do you remember this part of the story?
*¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem.
² They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

³ When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him.*

— Matthew 2:1-3

Did I mention that Herod the Great was
a pathological, paranoid, homicidal king?

He had fortresses built throughout the region
To which he could retreat
if there was ever a rebellion against him
(Show Masada Fortress Slide)
There was Masada, overlooking the Dead Sea
This was the site of the mass suicide of 960 Jewish rebels
As the Roman Army ended their siege there in 74 AD

And outside of Bethlehem there was the Herodium Fortress
(Show Herodium Fortress Slide)
It is just three miles southeast of downtown Bethlehem

What Herod did, was have his workers,
Who may or may not have been willing workers,
(Show Herodium hills Slide)
He made them take one hill or little mountain,
And move it on top of the hill next to it
To double its size
And then he had his fortress constructed
on top of this doubly high mountain

If you were three miles away in Bethlehem
It would be hard to miss

So, back to the story...

(Show Magi and Herod Slide)

The Wise Men tell Herod that there's a newborn king in town
Herod is troubled by this news,

And his paranoia affects everyone around him

Everyone in **Jerusalem**, the Bible tells us.

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him."
— Matthew 2:7-8

Yeah, Herod is planning to worship this newborn king.

I don't think that was Herod's plan

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But the Magi don't head back to Jerusalem after finding Jesus.

¹² Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.
— Matthew 2:12

And we pick up the story in today's reading...

¹³ When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt."
—Matthew 2:13a

This is vital, because,

¹⁶ When Herod knew the magi had fooled him, he grew very angry. He sent soldiers to kill all the male children in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding territory who were two years old and younger, according to the time that he had learned from the magi.
— Matthew 2:16

Yeah, this is really bad news

Heartbreaking news – wailing and weeping news

(Show The Massacre of the Innocents Slide)

As the Coventry Carol goes,
*Herod the king,
in his raging,
charged he hath this day
his men of might,
in his own sight,
all young children to slay.*

And we have what is known in the Church
as the *Massacre of the Innocents*

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Even though Herod went to great lengths to kill little Jesus
Herod did not succeed.

What happened to save Jesus so that he wasn't killed with the rest?
Joseph heard God through his dream
And took action

And did you notice what the angel said,
Or more **importantly**, what the angel **did not say**?
(Show Zechariah Slide)

When the angel appears to Zechariah, John the Baptist's dad,
The angel says, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah."

(Show Mary Slide)

When Gabriel appears to Mary to tell her that she will bear a son
The angel says, "Don't be afraid, Mary"
(Show Joseph Annunciation Slide)

When the angel appeared to Joseph the first time,
to tell him to take Mary as his wife,
the angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid."

(Show Shepherds Slide)

When the angel of the Lord stood before the shepherds,
The angel said, "Don't be afraid!"

(Show Joseph Dream Slide)

Yet in today's story, how does the angel start the sentence?
Do you remember?

"Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. ...

¹³ When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him." ¹⁴ Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt.

– Matthew 2:13-14

Does the angel say here,

"Don't be afraid"?

No

Because now **is** the time to **be afraid**

Now **is** the time to jump up out of bed and run for your life

(Show Flight to Egypt Slide)

And while it was still night

Joseph got up, and took the child and his mother to Egypt

And guess what...

Joseph listened to God and saved Jesus' life

And, guess what else...

There are times when we, too,
need to pay attention and listen to God.

We too, need to be able to hear God when God speaks to us

And we need to have the confidence

to carry out God's call and direction for our lives

And we also need to have the confidence

to carry out God's call and direction to others who he loves,

So that they can be saved from harm

I'm looking forward to retirement

I love you all, but I'm looking forward to retirement

I don't know everything that will fill all my retired days,

But I do know that I will be doing things

and will be active in things

that I believe God is calling me to do

Things that have been harder to do

As I have led and been a representation of local congregations

Where in your life is God, through the angels, God's messengers

Telling you to get up

"Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt..."

Get up, and take care of God's children whom God loves

We live in a world today

Where there is Good News and bad news.

And sometimes we need to get up and do something.

(Response Hymn

"Coventry Carol"

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