

Sunday, December 13, 2009
“The Stars Come Out at Night”
By Pastor Edward J. Thomas

The star over Bethlehem drew worshipers to the baby Jesus, and our lives today can and should be doing the same thing: Drawing people toward Jesus. This is our responsibility as followers of Christ. (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-10, 5:14-16)

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-10, 5:14-16

1. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,*
2. *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

9. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

10. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.*

Matthew 5:14-16

14. *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*
15. *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*
16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

When we read the story of how Esther came to be in the presence of the King in the book of Esther in the Bible, we see that the events leading to this were based on one woman's (Vashti's) desire to protect her honor and God's honor in her life so much that it cost her the love of the King. The King held a great party that lasted for months on end. The party is described in the Bible in a way that lets us know that it had turned into a drinking event.

Esther 1:5-7

5. *And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;*
6. *[Where were] white, green, and blue, [hangings], fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds [were of] gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.*
7. *And they gave [them] drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.*

While the party raged on, Vashti (the queen) was summoned before the king to parade her beauty for all the people of the court. But because of her love of God and honor for Him, she refused the king and found herself banished. The king in his drunken state had turned away the queen who he loved very much, but he could not go back on his word. This is how Esther was brought into the court of the king and found herself as the queen.

Once she was the queen, Esther found herself in a position where she found out that the Children of Israel were in danger of being killed. She knew she had to do something, but also knew that doing so would put her life in danger. But Esther had come to the kingdom to serve God in a time just like this (Esther 4:14)

Esther 4:14

14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, [then] shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this?

Esther found strength through God though. It's this same strength that we read about in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 10:13

13. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].

Pastor Thomas asked: What would you lay your life down for? Vashti laid her life as she knew it down for her honor, and for God's honor in her life. Esther put her life on the line for the people of God. The three Hebrew Children laid their life down for their testimonies to give God His rightful place. The result of which was the king realizing the ultimate power of God.

When it comes to sin, we have to find the ability to say "no" and make a stand for God just like these three examples from scripture. This won't always be easy. The Bible is full of example of people that said "no" to the status quo and did what as right regardless of the cost.

Joseph was in a situation where his master's wife had fallen for him. He refused her sexual advances and stood up for what was right in God's eyes. The consequences were steep. Potiphar's wife was so angry that Joseph had refused her that she framed him for rape and landed Joseph in prison. Was this experience of saying "no" for the sake of pleasing God easy? No. Of course it wasn't, but it allowed Joseph to be in the place that fulfilled God's plan for his life. Joseph put God first and allowed God's plan to move forward.

We have to do the same thing in our lives today. We have to say no to temptation of sin and allow God's will for our lives to play out. It will not always be easy, but in the end it's always worth it.

Even Jesus found himself in a place where he was tempted in Luke 4:1, 5

Luke 4:1

1. *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*
5. *And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*

But we have to understand that God has already given us the power over temptation. He has given us dominion over the world so we don't have to give in to its temptations. Instead, there is so much for us to enjoy in His love, mercy, power and holiness. We can't take the world on Satan's terms. Satan's power leads straight to destruction, but God's power leads to life. It's our choice which we will accept. When we don't say "no" to sin, we forfeit God's power in our lives.

Luke 4:9-12 Shows us what Jesus did when he was faced with temptation very clearly.

Luke 4:9-12

9. *And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:*
10. *For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:*
11. *And in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*
12. *And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Satan tempted Jesus by questioning who he was and questioning his relationship with God. He does the same exact thing to us in the present day as we live our lives day-to-day. Jesus said "no" to letting Satan get him down, distracting him, and questioning his relationship with God. We have that same power through Jesus as our savior. We have to make sure that we are always aware of our relationship with God and just how important it really is.

We can stand up and allow God's strength to shine just like the star over the stable when Jesus was first born. God needs us to shine for Him when there is no other light around. Our lives are stars that point to Christ. In the military, they still use the stars to find their position and navigate. In that same way, if we are shining Jesus' love, we can help the people around us in our lives find out where they are in relationship to Christ.

Our testimony will always be just enough to make a difference. It will light the way. We cannot doubt this. Before David was king and was just a little boy bringing lunch to his

big brothers, he knew that there was a cause for his actions. This is the same sense of purpose each of us should carry through our lives because we can stand up to the world's temptations and say "no" so we can lead others to Christ.

In scripture we learn that David was asked what he was doing when he brought lunch to his brothers, but he knew that he had a cause from God for what he was doing.

I Samuel 17:28-29

28. And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

29. And David said, What have I now done? [Is there] not a cause?

This is our reward if we shine.

Hebrews 10: 38-39

38. Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Philippians 2:15

15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Every day we have the ability to say no to sin and allowing our testimony to shine. Let's do it and make sure that we lead others to Christ.