Challenge 27 of 40

Reflection by Karl Haffner - Dayton, USA

A Tale of Two Kings - Never in human history were two kings more opposite.

King Herod

King Herod was born into a political family in 73 BC. Historians describe him as tall and intimidating, cruel and competitive. His father, also a king, was poisoned by a political opponent. Herod responded by inviting his father's murderers to a banquet where the greeters were hit men. According to the history books, Herod slept well that night. He was not one for remorse.

From that point on, Herod shielded himself to the possibility of a secret ingredient landing in his soup. He exercised absolute power. He frequently barked orders that resulted in arrests, beatings, extortion, blackmail, kidnappings, torture, and execution. For example, when he came into power as the governor, a band of troublemakers were wreaking havoc in Galilee. Immediately, Herod captured the leader of the marauder band and had him executed in a long and painful manner. The rebels got the point.

Herod also ordered the execution of any possible candidate for his office--including two of his wives, three of his sons, and all babies following Christ's birth. The execution of one of his sons he commanded while on his deathbed. No wonder the emperor Augustus reportedly once said “I would rather be Herod’s swine than his son.”
Herod was so addicted to power that he even tried to control the emotions expressed at his own funeral. In his final year of life, Herod's body was infected with disease; his suffering was so intense that often his screams could be heard in the palace throughout the night. The anguish was more than mere physical pain. He brooded over the realization that his death would be cause for celebration. Because he insisted on mourning at his funeral, he devised one final, desperate plan. He schemed to bring together the top leaders of the land for a meeting in Jericho and, once they arrived, he would order the gates locked. Just before his last breath, Herod planned to order them to be massacred. One way or another, the tears of the people would flow at his death. As it turned out, his plan backfired and the leaders escaped.

Herod died alone. No one cried. He is despised in history. And "King Herod the Great" is an apt oxymoron.

King Jesus

At the same time in history another king was born. His kingdom, however, was about serving, loving and giving everything away. It was the opposite of Herod's kingdom in every respect.

Christ's life presents a jolting model of downward mobility. He entered the world in a barn amidst the stench of dung and urine. A more humble place of birth could not have been chosen.

Augustine described it this way: “Man's maker was made man that He, ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast; that the Bread might hunger, . . . that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die.” King Jesus recklessly gave His life away. He healed lepers. He embraced outcasts. He hugged the scorned. He loved the unlovables. That's just the kind of King He was.

Listen to Ellen White's description of this King: "What a wonderful reverence Jesus expressed in his life mission for human life! He stood not among the people as a king demanding attention, reverence, service, but as one who wished to serve, to lift up humanity. He said he had not come to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Ellen White, Review and Herald, 1887-04-12.002).

Then Jesus died on a cross. His body became whip-torn flesh. His face was a mask of oozing blood and dripping spit; eyes puffy and swollen. His only crown was one of thorns.

In the end, there was only one thing these two kings shared in common: They both believed there was nothing that bloodshed could not cure.
Recalibrate

1) Would I live any differently today if Christ were to reign as sovereign King in my life? If so, how?

2) What would my day look like if I were to live as a servant king?

3) In what ways can I serve Jesus as the King of my life?