

## Christmas Through the Eyes of Caesar | Luke 2:1-7 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To expose the rival kings we serve and to remind ourselves why we should align ourselves to Jesus' kingdom.

**Sermon Refresher:** Luke sets the coming of Jesus in the context of Caesar Augustus' empire. It reminds us that the kingdom of the Messiah was good news to some and a threat to others. Augustus took many of the terms that we apply to Jesus (son of God, king of kings, lord, high priest, king of peace). Luke is telling us by this contrast that there are two kings with two gospels. Jesus is the true king. Caesar is the imposter.

**Icebreaker:** When is a time you had to wait and it drove you crazy?

**Transition:** Advent is a period of waiting for the coming of our saviour. While the Old Testament was almost entirely oriented toward waiting for the Messiah and lasted for thousands of years, we, in the time after Jesus' coming, have a hard time remembering the importance of waiting. We, as Americans in our age of instant gratification, have an even harder time waiting. The season of Advent is all the more important in order to train our hearts to remember how amazing and utterly important Jesus' coming was for the world.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Luke 2:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

1. Caesar's kingdom was two thousand years ago. What rival kingdoms are there today?
2. Read Matthew 6:24. How would we know whether something has become a rival king in the place of Jesus in our hearts?

## Matthew 6:24

<sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

3. What do these rival kingdoms promise us if we were willing to put them on the throne? How are these promises illusions?
4. Read John 19:12. When will serving Christ come across as being a traitor to rival kingdoms?

## John 19:12

<sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

5. Read Matthew 10:37-42. Living with Jesus as our king means making him a priority in our hearts, but also changes our approach to living. We must lose our lives for others and care for those the world deems insignificant. What is hard about following Jesus' pattern of losing our life to care for others?

## Matthew 10:37-42

<sup>37</sup> "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

<sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

<sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

<sup>40</sup> "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup> Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup> And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

6. Why is it worth it to live with Jesus as our king in light of the hardships? Why is he the better king?

### **Sharing and Prayer:**

Consider having an open prayer time in light of what people shared during the discussion, encouraging a time of confession for the ways we serve rival kings and a time of thanksgiving that God welcomes back rebels into his kingdom.