

Lesson: Matthew 2:1-12

¹ After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. – NIV84

Prayer of the Day:

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep us who are baptized into Christ faithful in our calling as your children and make us heirs with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. Alleluia. (Mark 2:2b cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Epiphany, the word literally means "a showing" or "a revealing." The festival of Epiphany is sometimes referred to as the Gentile Christmas because it is the first time we see non-Jewish individuals (other than the angels of course) worshipping our Savior. Thus, Jesus is revealed or shown to us as the Savior of all people. While this is the biggest lesson we learn as we witness the events of Epiphany, we would be wrong to think that it's the only lesson we see in our account. If we dial in the microscope a bit on those wisemen today, we begin to see a truth about God's church, the people Jesus Himself came to save and we are shown another truth, or even several, about us. **GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW THEIR SAVIOR KING! THEY SEEK HIM OUT FOR THE HOPE HE BRINGS. THEY DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO THE SERVICE OF HIS KINGDOM.**

We three kings of Orient are, Bearing gifts we traverse afar, Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star. Church tradition gives them names and origins. Melchior apparently hailed from Persia, Caspar from India, and Balthazar from Arabia. Their gifts had special symbolic meanings as well: gold signified Jesus' status as a king, incense takes us to the temple where it was regularly burned reminding us that this child is divine, the Son of God, and myrrh mixed with wine would touch Jesus lips as He hung on the cross to pay for your sins and mine.

Were there three kings? We don't know! We take the number from the gifts the lesson mentions. Were they kings? Our lesson speaks of Magi, astrologers, or advisers of a king but not kings themselves. Did they understand the significance of the gifts they brought? Who knows. Some have even called into question the faith in the hearts of the magi who came wondering out loud if they were coming for THE King or a king. Personally, I like to give them the benefit of the doubt there. Why call someone's faith into question when we have absolutely nothing to prove a lack of it?

So what do we know? Simply what the Bible tells us. *Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."* How did they know? Daniel had been in Babylon as were portions of God's Word carted off with the loot which had been taken from the temple during the deportation. No doubt the promise of the Messiah had been shared even recorded or copied for study by scholars in these foreign lands. Regardless of the fine points or detail, these magi knew of the promised king and came looking for Him and the hope He would bring.

So what does this teach us? God does tell us, *"everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)"* God's Word is a wonderful treasure for His people. It's whole goal and purpose is to point us to the forgiveness that we need so regularly in our everyday lives because truth be told we often act more like Herod than the Magi. We grow comfortable with the world around us and the creature comforts it provides. Our status and our lives begin to take the front seat and we may even buy into the lie that God's Word and His will in our lives are of little value and only seek to drive us from the throne of happiness we have worked so hard to achieve.

So God's Word comes in and reminds us who the real King is not just in our lives but over all things. As usurpers of the throne as we begin to tremble in our boots because of sin, Our God points us back to His Word once again. It honestly doesn't even require a careful search see it. What the Christ had come to do. He is our King the one who will guard and guide His people. Who will war against our enemies and while the gifts may or may not have been clear to the Magi who brought them they are to us. What beautiful pictures of how He will do His work. The King of all creation (the gold right) who is God Himself, absolute divinity (the incense) cloths Himself in flesh, becoming just like one of us. He is a toddler bopping around Bethlehem as Herod and the Magi have their meeting and He does all of this for you. So that His lips might taste the myrrh mixed with wine even as his hands and feet felt the sting of nails piercing them for all the times we failed to hail Him as King, as Christ, as Savior in our lives. In His resurrection our eyes will see the hope even as our hearts are filled with it. Because of His saving work as Ruler as Shepherd over His people, you and me, we can look forward to a time when kings do not oppose Him and every knee, Jew and Gentile alike will

bow before Him and we will reign victoriously with Him for all eternity, no sin, no sorrow, no death in the glory of heaven. Yes, because God leads His people to His Word, we know the hope which He brings. **GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW THEIR SAVIOR KING!**

Of course, such knowledge is bound to change things in this world. Herod and his officials knew this truth. It's why Jerusalem trembled. Herod had no intention of giving up the throne. The one he occupied in Jerusalem and the one in his heart overcome with selfishness, greed, and power. But God's people are different.

The Magi, had no dreams of visions of the wealth and power this Child would give to them, though He will provide wealth unlike anything our world could ever offer. Nor did they come with aspirations of an alliance between this King and the one they were currently serving. One thought and one action was on their minds. They had come to worship, to offer their respect and service to the King who would do so very much for them. Having seen Him, having heard the words of the angels warning to them, they even accept the dangers which are now present as they disobey Herod for the sake of this Child who simply must remain safe so that God's promises would be fulfilled. They were willing to place their lives on the line for His if caught sneaking out of Israel.

So it always is with God's people. No we may not need to sneak through the desert having been warned by angels of a wicked Kings intent. But we will devote ourselves to our King who went through far worse to save us from ourselves. The Apostle Paul will say "*I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* (Romans 12:1)"

When the Savior King speaks, His people will listen. We will seek out the opportunities given us to hear His voice in His Word that the eyes of faith might behold Him. Yes, we will worship each week "in-person" if we are able, online if we must, trusting in our God who has conquered every foe for us. But it doesn't simply stop at the manger or the cross confined comfortably in church. Overjoyed not by a star but by our salvation our very lives will be the treasures we present to our Savior in heartfelt adoration.

Yes, this is our teaching on vocation. Every aspect of our day to day lives announce our need for this King and our joy that He has won forgiveness for His people. So we talk to neighbors and friends about the hope that is ours. We raise our children in the important truths of Christ and Him crucified and risen for all people. We serve on boards and offer our talent for use in myriad ways God has given for His church to be of service to others, more importantly to Him through others in our everyday living. Yes, **GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW THEIR SAVIOR KING** and **THEY DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO THE SERVICE OF HIS KINGDOM.** No aspirations of greatness or hopes for power and prestige, just joy, just love, just adoration for all he has done for us.

Oh man, there is so much more these twelve verses can say to us. Thankfully, we have all week to pour over them. Dear friends what a blessing, what a gift, what an honor we see as the Magi come visit Jesus. **GOD'S PEOPLE KNOW THEIR SAVIOR KING! THEY SEEK HIM OUT FOR THE HOPE HE BRINGS. THEY DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TO THE SERVICE OF HIS KINGDOM.** Amen.