

Sermon – Matthew 2.1-12 (Epiphany – 2022)

Your King Revealed to You

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, You have given us the light of Your holy Word, the guiding star that leads us to the Christ-child: Send, we beseech You, Your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive this light and make use of it for our salvation, and that we, like the wise men, when they were seeking the star, may not be afraid because of any hardship or peril, but put all our trust in Your only-begotten Son as our only Savior, devote our earthly possessions to the advancement of Your kingdom, and in all things serve Him, Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

² saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

³ When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵ So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared.

⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.

¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by the truth. Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed,

An *epiphany* is a revelation, a bringing to light a truth. There was a revelation of the birth of the One who was born of the Jews.

A sign of the revelation was given to the wisemen, or magi. They saw the star of the Messiah appear in the sky. Some make guesses as to what this star is. Some pose the idea that it is the alignment of Jupiter and Saturn in the sky. Perhaps it could have been a comet. Of course, God could have supernaturally provided new light in the sky for the magi to see. Whichever it was, the Magi saw it as a sign that the King of the Jews had been born.

If there is any passage in the Old Testament that might have prophesied this star, it would be Numbers 24:17, which says, "**A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel.**" But it is very likely that these Magi are from a group of the Babylonian Magi that were descendants of those who knew Daniel and other believing Jews, and hearing the promises of God, they have believed that word of promise, and looked forward to the coming of the Christ.

The star revealed to them the Savior's birth, but the star wasn't enough to lead them to Jesus. They travelled to Judea, and came to King Herod to inquire about where they might find this child, the King of the Jews.

The epiphany of the Lord's birth now reached Herod. What was His response? He was troubled. He desired the child's death.

So where did Herod look to answer the Magis' question? Where did he go to find where this child was to be born? He went to the revelation of Holy Scripture! He asked the chief priests and scribes to tell him from Scripture where this child was to be born.

Herod acknowledged the Scripture. He believed Scripture, yet only those parts which were convenient to him. He trusted what the Bible said about where the child would be born, but he rejected the parts that speak of God's judgment, about repentance, and the authority and salvation of the Christ. He rejected the other words of Micah's prophecy that this Christchild would be the Ruler and Shepherd of Israel. Herod tells the wisemen that he wishes to go and worship him, but his heart is full of hypocrisy and murderous intent.

Then you have the chief priests and the scribes who knew Scripture very well. Did they receive the revelation of Christ's birth with joyful and glad hearts? We don't know where exactly their hearts were at this time, except that they feared Herod. But we know that during Christ's ministry their hearts were revealed to be self-righteous, and hostile to Christ and His message of repentance and faith.

But then there is the Magi. They confess Jesus to be the King of the Jews. They see him, not just as an earthly king, but as God, for they go to worship Him. By this time Joseph and Mary had a house they were living in. The Magi entered. They were not offended by the lowly town, the lowliness of the child, or his lowly family. But they believed what the Holy Scripture reveals about Him. He is the King of the Jews, but these non-Jews, these Gentiles, receive Him as their king. He is the King of Grace who comes to save sinners. Recognizing this, they fell down before Him and worshipped Him, and offered Him their treasures.

Here we have a huge contrast between the reactions to the revelation of Christ. And this contrast remains today. Many scoff at Scripture. Many rage against it like Herod, because the Christ which Scripture reveals to us, threatens our own lordship over our lives.

Many, like Herod will speak good words about Christ, saying that they will worship Him, though they are filled with hypocrisy. They might even acknowledge Scripture, but they believe only what is convenient for them, deny the rest, and reject the Christ revealed in Holy Scripture. It happens all the time. People will take passages in the Bible, tout some of Jesus' words about loving your neighbor, believe Jesus to be a teacher and example of love, but they ignore the rest of the Bible, such as the 10 Commandments which define what love is, and they also reject the love of God, by rejecting that the Son of God, in love, came in the flesh to save us from our sins.

There are those who are like the scribes and high priests, who know the Scripture well. Yet, they do not have the trust in Christ. Their piety is only external, they participate in the ceremonies of the Church, but there is no faith in their hearts. They go through the motions, but there is no worship of God in their hearts.

But then there are those who are like the wisemen, who receive Jesus as their Lord. We pray that God would root out of our hearts all hypocrisy and indifference to the revelation of Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture. The faith of the Magi and the faith of us believers is not something that we were able to achieve, or decide to have. Rather the Holy Spirit, working through the revelation of Christ, created hearts that believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son and our Savior.

This is the truth that God, by His grace, revealed into the hearts of the Magi. One Bible commentator said, "The wisemen are the firstfruit, gleaned from the Gentile world, for the Kingdom of the Savior, and the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus and the Gentile world are first fulfilled in their journey to the crib in Bethlehem" (Ylvisaker, 96). The same truth that the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ, is our Savior, God has revealed into our Gentile hearts.

This truth isn't just a head knowledge, but it is a truth that God has implanted in our hearts, that leads us to repentance, to see Jesus alone as our Savior, and to respond to His grace with our worship and the sacrifice of our lives in loving service to Him.

What blessed revelation God has given us through His Holy Scripture: Jesus is our Savior! In Him, by His suffering and death on the cross, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation!

God preserve that saving revelation in believing hearts, so that we who worship our King now, may worship Him among the Magi and all the believing of every nation in the life to come. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.