**WE HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM**

December 30, 2018

Matthew 2:1-12

Key Verse 2:2 “and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’”

Today is the last Sunday of 2018. As we close 2018, we want to think about the Magi who came to worship Jesus. Among 4 Gospel writers, only Matthew tells this story. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the King sent by God, and that Jesus is worthy to be worshiped by all people. This story inspires us to realize that we were created to worship God. Jesus is God with us. That’s why his name is Immanuel, which means, ‘God with us.’ When we worship Jesus, we find the true meaning of life and true joy. May God help us to worship God like the Magi in the new year, and be filled with joy.

**First,** Magi from the east came to worship Jesus (1-2). Look at verse 1. “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem.” Jesus had come into the world, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. This was the greatest event in Israel’s history and the history of all mankind. Jesus came to save us from our sins. Jesus is Immanuel--God with us. After his birth, Magi from the east came to see him. Who were the Magi? According to the tradition the Magi came from ancient Persia or Babylon. They were called wise men because they were devoted to many studies including astrology, divination, and the interpretation of dreams. They were advisers to kings and they were highly respected in society. Why did they come to Jerusalem? Look at verse 2. “and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” They were looking for the king of the Jews to worship him. How did they know about him? The Magi’s main job was to see the stars every night. They believed that the star foretold man’s destiny, and special stars signalled the birth of great men. One night, as they surveyed the sky, they saw a great star; a very bright star; an extraordinary star. When they tried to research the meaning of the special star, they were convinced that the star was the star of the king of the Jews. They also knew the prophecy about the Messiah. Balaam is best known for his talking donkey. His prophecy in Numbers 24:17 has been known to be about the Messiah. It says, “I see him, but not now: I behold him, but not near: a star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, and the skulls of all the people of Sheth.” When the Magi sought the truth earnestly from their hearts, God blessed them to know about the king of the Jews, and they immediately made a long journey to Jerusalem to worship him.

Through the Magi, we are deeply reminded that we were created to worship God. Worship means great love and deep admiration and only God is to be worshiped (Matthew 4:10). Jesus is Immanuel—God with us who is alone worthy to receive our love. To worship God is to express intense love for God. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” The Magi made a long and costly journey spending a lot of money and time risking even their own lives bringing their best treasures to worship Jesus. It was pouring out their hearts and soul and strength indeed. It was true worship indeed! God made man in his own image. So man can be truly happy only when he seeks and loves God. Because of this, St. Augustine said in his confession, “Until I found the rest in God, I have never known true rest.” In John 4, the Samaritan woman who drew water from Jacob’s well worshiped men, thinking that if she met the Mr. Right, she would have been truly happy. But she couldn’t meet such men even though she married 5 times and had one boyfriend. Instead, in the course of seeking human love, she found heartbreak and misery. Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14) Here the water of Jacob’s well represents the water of human love. Human love never quenches the thirst of our souls because we were created in the image of God. Our soul can be filled only by God’s love that Jesus gives us. When we worship God, God fills our souls with his never-drying love and our inner thirst is quenched. Among us, is there anyone who still seeking human love? Please remember that human love never quenches your inner thirst because you were created in the image of God. When we review Genesis, we can understand clearly why the Magi came to worship Jesus. No matter who they may be, before finding Jesus, all men are nothing but fallen men with sinsick blood. They are nothing but restless wanderers with a sense of guilt and punishment (Ge 4). The Magi were not an exception. But instead of continuing their habitual sinful lives, the Magi began to seek God. Finally they met God in Jesus, and were overjoyed. Their joy gave them the meaning of life.

The words, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” are the first recorded words spoken by a person in the entire New Testament. (In Matthew 1, only the angel Gabriel speaks.) What do you think is the first question found in Old Testament? In Genesis 3:9, God asked Adam, “Where are you?” The entire message of the Old Testament can be summarized in the question God asks sinful mankind, “Where are you?” Adam could not answer. Adam was lost. Like Adam, each of us must admit that we are lost and have failed to live up to God’s standard. Compare that to the message of the New Testament. Instead of the Holy God asking sinful mankind, “Where are you?” a man is asking, “Where is God?” And God answers the question unequivocally, “I took on human flesh and came into the world at Bethlehem in Judea!” It hasn’t changed in 2,000 years. People are still searching for God, asking, “Where is God?” They may ask, “Where was God when my mother died of cancer?” Each of us must ask and answer that question, “Where–or Who–is God?” If we honestly, seriously seek God, we will always be led to Jesus. The Bible says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ...” “He is the image of the invisible God...for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.” (1 Timothy 2:5; Colossians 1:15,19) If any of you is seeking God, I encourage you to seek God with all your heart and with all your soul like the Magi. Then you will surely find him.

The Magi sought God and followed their desire to worship God. They were willing to sacrifice to worship God. Humanly speaking, they had everything; honor, recognition, and wealth. They might have looked happy even without worshiping God. But they made a long and costly journey to worship Jesus. It shows that even though they had very outstanding human conditions, things of the world could not satisfy them. That’s why they sought God and wanted to worship him. Jesus alone is worthy to receive our worship. We will see why it is so in the next part.

**Second,** Jesus is the shepherd king (3-8). Look at verse 3. “When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” King Herod ruled Israel from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. He was known as Herod the Great. But in reality he was great only in his title. He was constantly haunted by the fear of his throne because he killed too many people for his power. Once, Herod executed his own sons for suspicious conspiracy, and many innocent people perished with them. When Herod heard from the Magi that the king of the Jews had been born, he was not happy because he thought that the baby Jesus was a threat to his kingship. So, he was disturbed.

Look at verse 4. “When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.” Herod looked like a good Bible student. But his motive in studying the Bible was not to worship Jesus, but to eliminate Jesus. The religious leaders knew the answer precisely, based on the Scripture. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, just a few miles from Jerusalem. The religious leaders were so near the birthplace of the Messiah. But they made no effort to go there. What a great contrast with the Magi!

Look at verses 5-6. “’In Bethlehem in Judea’, they replied, ‘for this is what the prophet has written: ‘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.’” According to these words, we can know the characteristics of King Jesus. He is not like another authoritarian secular king but shepherd-like king. Shepherding means “taking care of.” The best example can be shown in David’s psalm 23. In Psalm 23:1-2, David said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.” This passage really gives us a beautiful picture of sheep lying on the green pastures enjoying full satisfaction and abundant life under the good shepherd’s care. Shepherd king Jesus gives us such abundant life. In John 10:10, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” The shepherd king protects his people, loves his people, and serves his people like a loving father. The climax of the shepherd king’s love is that he lays down his life for his sheep. In John 10:11, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Jesus gave up his life on the cross in our place in order to forgive our sins and take away all our sins and shames and condemnations. Peter was a very self-confident sinner not knowing his pride and self-righteousness. However, after denying Jesus three times, he came to know his sin deeply and at the same time the meaning of Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. Jesus was his good shepherd who died for his sins in order to save him from his sins and wounds. So later he confessed in 1 Peter 2;24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” Because Jesus died for our sins, he alone is worthy to receive our love and worship.

After hearing about the good shepherd Jesus, King Herod should have fallen to his knees in repentance. It was good news for him too. But he only took the information about the birth place of Jesus for his evil purpose. He secretly called the Magi to find out the exact time the star had appeared. It was to carry out his evil plot to kill Jesus. King Herod was smart and he seemed to outwit the Magi. However, God was in control. God helped the Magi find the Messiah through the Bible study. Later God warned them in dream to avoid Herod and go back to their country. God protected the Magi and the baby Jesus. Sometimes evil people of the world make us fearful. We feel that we must become cleverer. This is the devil’s temptation. When we follow the truth with a pure heart, God will protect us.

**Third,** the Magi bowed down and worshiped Jesus (9-12)**.** Look at verses 9-10. “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. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.” When the Magi resumed their journey, suddenly, the star they had seen in the east appeared again. It was sent by God to lead them to the child. When they saw the star, they realized they were on the right track. When they saw the star, they realized that God was with them and was guiding them on their journey. When they saw the star, they knew that finally they were about to meet the one they had struggled so hard to find. So, they were overjoyed.

Here, we learn true joy comes to those who seek Jesus with all their hearts and strength. The Magi were overjoyed because God confirmed through the star that they had made a right choice to seek and worship baby Jesus. Deuteronomy 4:29 says, “But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.” This requires a decision of faith, and perseverance through trial. It is not easy. But in the end it gives us overflowing joy and eternal life. The Magi were overjoyed when they realized that they finally came to Jesus and were about to meet him.

Look at verse 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.” Gold was the gift for a king. Incense was the gift for a priest. Myrrh was the gift for the one who dies. Their gifts exactly show their personal faith in Jesus and also the exact identity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the King of the kings. He is the High Priest who intercedes for us between God and man. Jesus also came to die for our sins. Through his death and resurrection, he became our true king; the Savior King, the Shepherd King.

Today we learned from the Magi that we were made to worship God. When we seek God, find God and worship God, we can experience true joy and have eternal life. We also learned that Jesus is our shepherd King who laid down his life for us. He alone is worthy of our worship forever. May God bless you to worship God in the new year 2019, and be overjoyed.