

Sunday of the Epiphany
3rd January 2021
Worship @ Home in Groups

Come to Jesus

Gathering Song

We Three Kings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtUGgBwzEM>

Grow in His Grace

Scriptures: Matthew 2:1-12

TODAY'S THEME: CHRISTMAS IS MORE THAN A DAY

**Discussion & Sharing on the
Scriptures**

Song

The First Noel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mawwURNqPCO>

Group Prayers

The Lord's Supper - shared in the homes

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth
as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin
against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver
us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, & the
glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Go in His Power

***(Name), † child of God,
Christ lays claim to all of you
all the time!***

Amen.

Song

As With Gladness Men of Old

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bfn2FlqmWO8>

Show His Love

Matthew 2:1-12

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him."

³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?"

⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

⁹ After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

FAITH CHAT:

1. What was your favourite part of your Christmas celebrations?
2. How can you share the gift of God's Son with someone whose Christmas did not recognize his birth?
3. As this 2021 begins, what are you hoping God does in your life?

While the decorations go UP weeks ahead of Christmas Day, most are down by New Year's. Why? What's our rush to arrive at the "party," but then leave so soon? It likely took the wise travelers almost 2 years to reach the home where Jesus & his family were living. That's a dedicated persistent search. They came to worship. They came looking for a king not-yet-on-a-throne. Jesus arrives as a threat to every human convention & control mechanism because he alone can be King, Lord, & Saviour. All other pretenders lead to ruin & death. Christmas, the Incarnation, God taking on human flesh so we might wear his glory, is not a calendar moment, quickly celebrated & rapidly packed away. Christmas is an intrusion into our lives, a new way of being & living that takes hold of us & claims us for the Father. Christmas is a way of life in the way of Jesus, humble, responsive to the Father's will, seeking the lowest place & lowly people to assure them of the Father's never-failing love & care. Christmas is new life for us.

Group Study & Discussion

1. Read Matthew 2:1-12. What questions immediately come to mind for you? Have you read these passages so often that being familiar with them hinders hearing them afresh today?
2. We read the rest of this account last week, (vss 13-23) so you're hearing the story in reverse order. Given what you know Herod will ultimately do, how does that effect your understanding & appreciation of the wise travellers? Knowing what you know about the world's opposition to the good news, how is your devotion strengthened knowing that others have been killed, & in parts of today's world are still being killed, for the name of Jesus?
3. What is surprising to you about the wise men's involvement in God's plan for Jesus' birth? What do you think motivated the wise men to journey so far from home to investigate another religion's Messiah?
4. Read Numbers 24:17 & Isaiah 9:6-7. Based on these prophecies, what might the wise men have thought about Jesus' mission and purpose? What titles are given for the Messiah? What do these four titles signify? What do you think of when you hear the word peace? Why do you think the title of "Prince of Peace" was given for the promised Messiah? What evidence do you see in our world that people are searching for peace? How has Jesus been the "Prince of Peace" in your life recently?
5. What do you think it means that the Magi came to worship? How does this influence your understanding of worship? How are both their bowing down and giving their treasures related to true worship?
6. What effect did their inquiries have on King Herod and the people of Jerusalem? Why? What did King Herod do? How did Herod use the Bible? Can you think of other examples of people using the Scriptures for dishonest or evil intent?
7. The wise men (or magi) ask for "one born king of the Jews", and Herod knows at once they're not looking for him or his family. What does it mean that only non-Jews used this language to describe Jesus? What do "outsiders" see that "insiders" don't?
8. Why did Herod run to the chief priests and scribes for answers? When you face challenging situations, do you seek counsel from people who will speak truth or people who will confirm what you want to hear? The more we love controlling our own lives, the harder it is when we lose control. What is a natural first reaction when your personal "empire" feels threatened?
9. Herod and the religious leadership in Jerusalem had all the information they needed to join the Magi in worship, but were blind to God's plan of redemption because of the lust for their own plans and purposes. In what ways can your own plans and desires distract you from following God's greater will? When you see this happening in your own life, what do you do?
10. In what area of your life do you most need peace right now? Peace with God? Peace with yourself? Peace with others? In your faith now, would you say that you are searching or following? If the answer is both, can you explain and explore for your group the difference, and when you are doing one or the other?
11. Our world, and some Christians, tend to box Christmas up within 24 hours. How is the prolonged search of the wise travellers, the flight from Herod's soldiers, and the nature of Jesus the Messiah, a clear word from the Father to you that Christmas, Christ coming to live among & in us, is more than a once-a-year experience in our lives?