

Sunday Sermon: January 6, 2019

Sermon Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon Theme: Jesus is Revealed as the Light for the Whole World

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, 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.”

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.

Most of us know about the Luxor light on the strip. It is the 273,000 watt light on the top of the pyramid. It costs almost \$2000 per hour to light the light. You can see that light from almost anywhere in town. Pilots use it to navigate. It is so bright it can be seen from space

What makes the Luxor light so special? The Luxor light wouldn’t be special if it was just a light that lit the inside of the pyramid. It wouldn’t be so special if it just was on once or twice a year. The Luxor light is special because that light is on all the time for everyone to see.

Our Savior, Jesus, is called the Light of the world. Jesus is the light because his message of forgiveness and salvation is the light in this world of sin that shines longer and brighter than any man-made light that sits on a casino in Las Vegas.

Today is called Epiphany. It is the celebration of the revelation of Jesus as the light, the Savior of the whole world. God led these Gentile Magi so that they would know exactly who their Savior was. Jesus the Light, was revealed, that all people of every nation would come to him, believe in him and be saved.

The reading from Matthew chapter 2, which serves as our meditation this morning, is sometimes used on Gentile Christmas. In some cultures, Christmas is celebrated on the first Sunday of January and they use Matthew chapter 2 on this celebration of Christmas. That seems strange to us, but as we walk through this reading, we will see that God’s hand was revealing his Savior to these Magi in just as special a way as he led shepherds to the manger.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, 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.”

Many of us put something very special at the top of our trees. Most people put either an angel or a star. Each has special significance. The angels were the first to proclaim that Jesus had been born. They sang of the coming of Jesus to the shepherds.

Others of us have a star at the top of our tree. How many of your births were marked by a new star in the sky? How many births of important people throughout history were marked by a new star in the sky? As far as I know, there is only one birth that has been marked by a new star in the sky. That was the birth of Jesus. We place the star on top of our tree because it was special star that proclaimed the birth of the Savior just as clearly and miraculously to a different group of people as the angels did with the shepherds.

That star was a very special star. It was so special that a group of astronomers saw that star and knew what it meant. They knew that this star meant that the Messiah, the one that had been talked about in the Old Testament, had been born.

This star was unlike any other star because of God used it for. God used this star to lead this entourage of men from one country, in the east, over deserts, through the country sides, through the towns to the nation of Judah and its capital of Jerusalem.

Matthew understates this miracle. **Magi from the east came to Jerusalem.** These were not just weary travelers. These were wise and important men. They were dignitaries from what had been known as Babylonian and what was known as Persian. They had first had touch with Old Testament prophecy through the remnant that had been brought to Babylon for 70 years. This group of wise men had studied the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures and through those studies believed in God and his Messiah.

If you study the Arab customs of the day, there were more than likely many more than 2 or 3 in this delegation. There were probably a large group of Magi, helpers, servants and caretakers. This entourage entering Jerusalem would have certainly stirred things up among the people and would have also set Herod on edge. They came looking for one things, the Messiah. **“Where is the one who had been born the king of the Jews. We star his star in the east and have come to worship him.”**

Herod, the one who built the temple that still stands today in Jerusalem, did not know much about the Messiah. He had to call in the experts to find out what Messiah they were walking about.

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.”

The Light of salvation has been revealed to those who believed it, to Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Mary and Joseph, to shepherds, to Simeon and Anna, and now to the Wise Men. Although there were many who believed in that light, there were others who refused to believe. We see that in the reaction of Herod. **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.” ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.**

Herod had the truth of his salvation a few miles down the road, he had these men speaking that truth to him, he had advisers who shared the prophecies, instead of believing he turned his back on his Savior and planned to have him killed.

The sad truth is that there are a lot of Herod’s. There are many people who have heard about Jesus, but don’t care. Some reject the Savior all together because they don’t think they need a Savior. Others reject Jesus by turning him into a good luck charm. I better come to church every now and again just to cover my bases. Others reject Jesus by taking him for granted. As long as Jesus takes care of me, I will believe in him, but if anything doesn’t go the way I want. If I don’t hear what I want to hear, I will do it my own way.

The apostle John tells us that, **[Jesus, the Light]was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

We must admit that there are times that our sinful nature thinks we are better than God, takes him for granted and just tries to cover spiritual bases. We are not always that anxious to praise and thank God as we should. We don’t make time for the Lord. Instead, we want church to fit conveniently into our schedule. We want God in our life, but on our own terms, so we come when just often enough that people won’t forget our name or face.

It is remarkable to think that God sent his Messiah for people just like us, who would take him for granted and overlook him. Jesus was not going to be an earthly king and sit on the throne of Jerusalem. Instead, Jesus would suffer and die to take away the sins of the whole world., even Herod’s, even yours and mine. Through this suffering and death, Jesus would forgive us for all the times that we have failed to thank and praise him as the Savior he is. The light of the world has been revealed to us and through faith we believe we are forgiven because of what he has done.

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.

After this side trip to Jerusalem, the star miraculously appeared once again and led them to the house, the place where Jesus was staying.

All this took time. Think about all the times that the Magi could have stopped and gone home. But they had faith that God was guiding that star and guiding them to see something special. Like the shepherds, when they saw Jesus with Mary and Joseph, who were now living in a little house in Bethlehem, they did not have to check references, they knew what God had promised was revealed to them. They praised him with all they had.

As we look at the tree this morning, we see the star that sits on top. The star guided these Gentile Wise Men to the light of the world. God has sent his light of salvation into the world and he has made this Savior known that all people, even you and me could be saved. Amen.