

ESF, Lord's day service message
12/21/2014

Worship the King
Matthew 2:1-12

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.

What is the real meaning of Christmas? In today's word the real meaning of Christmas is found in worship. Worship is the key meaning

of Christmas. Through the story of the Magi, today's word proves that truth.

Living sacrifice

The Magi came to Israel from another country. *After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, ... Magi from the east came to Jerusalem* (Matthew 2:1). "From the east" means that they came from a far away country. They took a long journey.

Such a journey in those days involved weeks or even months of incredible dangers and difficulties. Undoubtedly there were areas that were almost uncharted, where bands of robbers ambushed those who traveled on the roads. The journey was a very dangerous, costly and risky journey. They risked their own lives to take the journey.

Then why did they take such a dangerous and perilous journey? In verse 2, we can find out the reason and purpose of their journey: *"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."*

They took the journey not to seek their personal gain, such as enriching their lives by traveling to a foreign country, or by researching an unusual star, or by finding a business opportunity. The sole purpose of their journey was to worship the king, who was born to be the savior of the world. To worship the king, they took such a dangerous, perilous, and risky journey.

Nobody forced them to do so. They were willing to do so. They offered themselves as living sacrifices to worship the Savior. God was pleased with them when they worship him as living sacrifices as Paul says in Romans 12:1- *offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.*

While they offered themselves as living sacrifices in worshiping God, God revealed to them the secret of the birth of the Savior through a star.

God protected them from all evils and dangers on the journey to find the Savior. God used the cruel king Herod to help them. The Lord used even the resources and power of a foreign government to help them. The Lord filled their hearts with joy along the journey.

Do you want to see God's spiritual secret? Do you want to experience God's supernatural protection from the many dangers in this world? Do you want to live with a joyful spirit?

Then offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice. Come out of your comfort zone and take action to serve the Lord. Some of you may work six days a week, ten hours a day. Sunday is the only day you have to take care of your personal needs –catching up on sleep, finishing laundry, resting etc. So coming to church every Sunday may be a sacrifice. If you also have to spend time coming to prayer meetings, Bible studies, evangelism, or taking care of people, you sacrifice far more. But those actions are living sacrifices that please God. God accepts such living sacrifices and blesses you as he blessed the Magi –showing spiritual secrets, guidance, protection, and joy. Be willing to sacrifice yourself to worship the Lord.

Worship together

The Bible does not tell how many Magi came to worship the King. But the word “Magi” is the plural form of “Magus.” So, they were at least two or three or maybe more in number. It means that they took the dangerous and costly journey together. They prepared to worship the King together and came to worship Him together.

If each of them had tried to find the Savior individually, they would have been very lonely on the journey. Each of them would have been an easy target for robbers. But by taking the journey together to worship the Lord, they could encourage each other. When somebody got tired and felt like quitting the journey others could encourage him to continue. By

praying together and sharing their faith together, they could avoid serious mistakes on the journey.

Everybody can worship the Lord alone. But worship also should be done together among believers, because God wants to receive collective worship from His people. When God delivered “*his people*” from slavery in Egypt, God said that they would worship him *together* after the deliverance (Ex. 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13). In heaven *people from all nations* will worship the Lord *together* (Revelation 7:9-17).

The Magi may not have agreed in all issues they faced while they were seeking, traveling, and worshipping the Lord. But they constantly focused on one goal - seeking and worshipping the Lord. As a result they could forgive each other and keep themselves together in unity.

While we serve the Lord together there are certainly times of conflict. But when we focus on seeking and worshipping the Lord, we can be one even if we are different in many aspects because God gives us the spirit of forgiveness and the spirit of unity.

Are you living in conflict with people around you? Try to focus on worshipping the Lord together with them. Then God will give you the power of forgiveness. God will always give peace to you and to others around you.

Giving gifts

When we seek the Lord, we often expect to receive something from the Lord rather than to give Him something. But a key to worship is not receiving but giving. That is what is in the worship of the Magi. They came to the newborn King not to receive anything from Him but to give their precious gifts to the King. They didn't come with cheap stuff or leftovers but with gifts that were very costly-gold, incense, and myrrh. Also, their gifts were very meaningful in expressing their faith in Christ.

The gift of gold

Gold has always been one of the most valuable commodities on earth. In ancient times, gold indicated kingship. Kings received gold as tribute. Through the gift of gold, they honored the newborn Christ as the King of all kings (Dan. 10:17; Rev. 1:5; 17:14).

If you honor the Lord as the King of all kings, you will give Him your gold. Your gold may be the best portion of the time in a day, the best talent among all of your talents. Your gold may be the center of your heart.

The gift of incense

Incense was used by the priests in worship. Through the gift of incense, they honored Jesus as the Priest (Heb. 4:14). It was also a symbol of prayer. The Lord had commanded them to use it and burn it in their acts of worship. Revelation 5:8 speaks of incense as prayers, “...*Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*”

God is really pleased with our sincere prayers in worship. When you pray you are not only asking something from the Lord but also giving the best portion of your spirit to the Lord.

The gift of myrrh

In Jesus' time, people used myrrh to embalm their dead. Through the gift of myrrh, the magi honored Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God who would sacrifice His life to bring forgiveness of men's sins (John 1:29; Hebrews 10:10; Revelation 13:8).

Whenever we come to worship the Lord, we have to confess our faith by acknowledging that He is the Lamb of God who died for the forgiveness of our sins.

If they had come to receive something from the newborn King they must have been very discouraged. There was nothing they could get from the newborn baby. The baby had nothing to give them. The baby's parents were so poor that they could not even support their travel expenses.

But because they came to give, they did not get discouraged when the baby did not give anything to them. Instead, they rejoiced in their giving. While they were giving the gifts to the Lord, He gave them great joy.

To the giving heart, God brings joy. If you want to live a joyful life always, try what the Magi did- be a giving person, try to give generously to the Lord first and then to others.