

The Epiphany of Our Lord

January 4, 2015

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 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. "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.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 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." 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. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (NIV)

I am not big on making resolutions – never have been. Some of you, especially my wife Lisa, may be thinking that I am already perfect and don't need to change anything. Surprisingly, that is not true! There are actually many changes I could make to better me and my life, but I just don't see why I need a changing calendar to make them. I don't know where you stand on resolutions. But if you make them I want to add one to your list today if you didn't have this on it already. I want you to consider your worship life. Where has that been on your list of priorities? Where should it be on your list of priorities? Do you strive to be here every Sunday to worship? Are you here a couple times a month, a handful of times a year? Do you place worship below other activities and come only when your Sunday morning schedule is finally open?

God has much to say to us about our worship life in His Word – it is even one of the first three commandments God gives to us. When God was Israel's everything including their government, King, and guide, their entire lives centered around their worship life. In this New Year I pray we allow God and His Word to be our guide when it comes to worship. No matter where worship has been on your priority list, I pray these words of God benefit you this morning. As we have come today to worship I pray our eyes are opened so we are able to answer the question: **Why worship?**

We don't have a list of instructions or a specific command to govern our worship life here in Matthew. Rather we have an example. It is a story many of us know well. The Magi or wise men as we call them come from afar, possibly from Babylon, to find Jesus. While songs speak of three of them we don't know how many make this journey following the star that leads

them into Jerusalem. But what we know is that these men are determined to find Jesus. A wicked King, unaware people, and misguided steps were not enough to stop them. When they get the word and again see the star that leads them to the Child in Bethlehem, they worship Him. They fall on the ground before Jesus. They offer gifts –expensive and rare. They give reverence, and thanks, and praise. They have come to worship Him.

Why worship? Why travel that great distance? Why fall on your face and bow before Him? Why offer gifts of gold and incense and myrrh? Listen to what they said: ***"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 came to worship Him because of who Jesus is – the one born King of the Jews. They knew the promised Messiah to come of David would also be a King. He would sit on His throne forever. He will provide people with righteousness. He will rule with justice and in His days Judah will live in safety. Yes, this King comes to save His people. He will rule in the hearts of His people and His kingdom is not of this world. This King is their God. This is why they worship Him.

Do we ever forget why we are here to worship? Would we travel the same distance these Magi did just to worship Him? When we get here do we give Him the same kind of reverence these wise men did as they bowed low before Him? Do we eagerly thank and praise Him? Do we honor our Lord with our first-fruits and give Him our best gifts when it comes time for the offering? Wouldn't you agree our worship too often is lacking? Wouldn't you agree we are all able to learn something from the Magi here? We sometimes need this reminder of why we worship. We too worship because of who our God is and because who our Savior is – He is our King. This morning we focused on all our King does for us. All we have, and all we are, comes from Him. Our King provides us with every physical and spiritual blessing. Our Kings gives us righteousness and forgiveness and life and salvation. Our King saves us by giving His life on a cross for us and by taking His life back up from the grave for us. This is why we too have come to worship Him!

There is still more to the answer of the question of why worship. When the Magi came to worship it is true they offered their reverence, and praise, and thanks, and gifts. It is also true they were given something as they came to worship. We worship because it gives us what we need. What these worshippers from afar needed more than anything else was a Savior. What they needed more than anything was to be guided by God's Word. Did you catch how the Magi really found Jesus? It was not just because of the miraculous star God used to lead them. It was God's Word which told them where Christ would be born. What these wise men received when they worshipped was the best gift of all – they got to see their Savior. Their faith was strengthened. They were filled with great joy.

Why worship? It is here at worship we too receive what we need. We need to see our Savior. We need to hear how His blood has washed our every sin away. We need to hear how nothing in the world can separate us from His love. We need His Word to guide us on our way. We need our faith strengthened for our journey. We come to worship for it is here where we find true peace, and true hope, and true joy. It is here at worship with our fellow believers where we are encouraged to be ready for His coming again. We worship because here God gives us what we need.

Someone once wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. *"I've gone for 30 years now,"* he wrote, *"and in that time I have heard something like 3000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving*

sermons at all. So why should I worship anymore?" Then one week a wise elderly Christian man wrote this in reply. *"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time every single week my wife has cooked for me. I have eaten some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single week of those meals. So why should I eat these meals anymore?"*

My friends, what an awesome answer to why we worship! Would we go an entire week without feeding our bodies? Why would we want to go a single week without feeding our souls? As we begin this New Year think about this question: How many "meals" are we willing to miss? Why worship? Thank God that we have this wonderful example of the Magi. I pray we follow them in coming to see Jesus every week. I pray we come with ready hearts and give Him our best because of who our God is and I pray while we are here together God keeps giving us what we need. I pray we make it our top priority to listen to God's command and to join the Magi in saying: ***"We have come to worship Him!"*** This is one resolution that is worth keeping! We have God's guarantee. Why worship? This year I pray we don't even make this a question. Amen.