

*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 <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: <sup>6</sup> "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." <sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

**The star leads the way.**

**It leads from darkness to light.**

**It leads to a path of adoration and honor.**

**It leads to place of exceedingly great joy.**

*Why are you even here?* One has to wonder if that thought was going through the mind of the magi. When they arrived in the city of Jerusalem no one seemed to know what they were talking about. There were no crowds of people hailing the birth of newborn king, there was nary a whisper of excitement and acknowledgment that this divine gift of the Messiah had been given. Had they misspent the last several months on a trip that was unwarranted and just a waste of their time? No one knew what they were talking about or seemed too excited to find out more. The birth of a newborn king, the one called the Messiah, the Savior, this was what God's Holy Scriptures had foretold. This was certainly cause for an ongoing celebration, but this wasn't the case at all when these weary travelers arrived into the capital city of Jerusalem. The king had not heard of such events and when the topic was brought up, the king became greatly disturbed and the whole city with him.

Yet, the travelers continued undeterred in their search, and now the king would lend his assistance. Something was amiss. The chief priests and those who taught the people

about the holy Scriptures had a sense of the promises of the LORD and the prophecies of the Messiah but were in no rush to inform the people of the possibility of the Messiah's birth. In Bethlehem in Judea, the promised one, would be born they reported, but did no more to follow up on the magi's claim. After the teachers and priests were dismissed, the king called the travelers together secretly and pressed on them with his insincere request, *make a careful search and when you find him report back to me so that I too may worship him.*

It was probably not at all what they expected. It was all very troubling. To some extent it had to be discouraging, it may have even led them to question their reason for being there. Why had they come all this way? Why had they put in all this effort? Why had they gone through all this trouble, if those who were so near, so close, were seemingly going about their everyday business like nothing at all had happened? Why were they who were from so far away making such a fuss out of the appearance of the star, if even the spiritual leaders of the very people the Savior had come from hadn't made the connection from the star to the child born in Bethlehem.

As they headed out of the city with these troubling questions darkening their path, they saw it again. It was the source of such encouraging and uplifting light. The star that they had seen when their journey had begun now continued to lead the way straight to the city of David. The star that had led them into the Scriptures to read through the promises of God, now beckoned them to come and see the fulfillment of those promises. High above the everyday darkness of cold public indifference, high above the dark and evil plotting of a prideful king, high above the self-doubt and daily troubles that the travelers had encountered, high above it all, was that star that led the way.

The star seemed to go ahead of them, guide them, until it stopped over the place where the child was, and this child would bring them unprecedented light and overwhelming joy. On coming to the house, they saw a mother a child, and in faith they knew and believed that this was no ordinary child, this was the Messiah, the Christ, the newborn King, who was born for them and for their salvation. Thus, they came to the boy in the house who was next to his mother and in holy reverence they fell at his feet. After all those miles, after all that time planning, traveling, they bowed down and worshiped a child who was the Son of God, the Lord of all. And with thankful, joy filled hearts they presented their gifts of thanks and praise. Gifts prepared for a king, worthy of great high priest, gifts given to the one who would give himself as the sacrifice that we needed. Gold, incense, and myrrh were the gifts that they gladly gave. And to this point they were led by the star that God had placed in the sky. Yes, the star leads the way. It led from darkness to light. It led them onto a path of adoration and honor. It led them to a place of exceedingly great joy

It may not be a brilliant star in the night sky, but the bright light of the gospel of Jesus Christ continually guides us through this life. The light of Christ is clearly displayed through the Holy Scriptures, and by the grace of God this light of Christ leads us from the darkness of unbelief and keeps us on a path of adoration and honor. The light of Christ continues to shine in the darkness as a needed source of uplifting encouragement, because even for those who have heard the promises of God, who have come to this house of

worship to praise the Christ-child, there is still plenty of darkness that would seek to rob us of our joy and our faith in God.

God had called us to the light. The brilliant light of Christ has come into our life, and like the magi God has put us on this path of faith. However, the darkness of the world around us tries its best to drag us off the path of adoration and praise. There is a cold indifference from the general public about spiritual things that might make us doubt our devotion to God. Sure, Christmas just happened only 12 days ago but many have moved on and left behind the things of Christmas as if they were unimportant myths and inconsequential fairy tales. There are those who are actively plotting against those who would worship Jesus, spreading their lies they make things uncomfortable and difficult for those who would worship Jesus. There are even those inside the church who have only added to the darkness of confusion and doubt, by failing to teach properly about the significance of these events.

And so here we are, and in the midst of the world's cold and dark indifference, and we might wonder, "Why are we here?" Why not stay home on Sunday like so many others? As we go about our journey to God's house the world seems all the more to be uncaring about what has been promised and fulfilled. Why bother to make the trip? Why not sleep in like my neighbor and enjoy the comforts of home on a Sunday morning like so many of my co-workers? Why not take it easy every Sunday, especially now when you can get up in time to watch playoff football and catch all the pregame analysis? Why not stay out and indulge in pleasure the night before and indulge in leisure the whole day through before work or the daily routine busies your week? Why all this bother? Why all this fuss? Why not hold on to your own money, your time, your efforts, and serve yourself? Our sinful nature might find this all appealing and resist the way that follows the light of our Savior, we might want to pull the covers over ourselves and stay in our sin, and the world around us certainly does its best to drag us and keep us in that darkness; telling us its lies that there is plenty of joy to be found in the empty pursuits that lead us away from the Christ.

But God in his grace has shown us the light, and we are drawn toward the light and lasting joy of Christ. In Christ Jesus there is joy that does not come or go. It does not quickly fade or leave us disappointed with the morning sun or the start of a work week, but it is a lasting joy that is beyond compare. It is joy that fills our hearts and spills into our lives. It goes with you. It is freely given. The good news of Jesus is constant source of encouragement and happiness even when life with all its dark corners gets uncomfortable and difficult. A child has been born for you and he is your Savior. He comes to forgive your sins. He come to lead you through the troubles of this life to his heavenly kingdom of endless joy.

Remember again how God led the magi by the brightness of the star. He led them out of the darkness of an unbelieving world and brought them close. Then after they encountered firsthand the darkness of an indifferent world and those that would hinder their path, God again led them by the light of the star, so that they could realize the unparalleled joy of God's promises fulfilled in Christ. ***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. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were***

**overjoyed.** The original language tells us that *they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.* God's promises had been fulfilled. Their journey of faith was validated as God's faithfulness was on display in this simple yet beautiful way. God kept his promise. A child was born, born for those who were so far away, but had now been drawn close. <sup>11</sup> ***On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.***

By his gift of faith, we are drawn to the one who had been promised to come to be our Savior and king. Once far away because of our sin and our unworthiness, the Lord has drawn us close by the light of Christ. The Holy Scriptures have brought to light this great epiphany that a Savior from sin, the Lord of our lives, the King of eternity, was born for us. God's Son has taken on flesh and he has come to take away our sins. He has come to wipe away our guilt and regret. He comes to bring us peace and hope and joy that is exceedingly great. God's own Son would come to give sinners peace with God. God's own Son would come to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Not just for one type of people in one particular time, but he comes for all people of all time. He comes for you and me. There is this brilliant light that shines in the midst of the darkness. He brings with him joy that lasts for more than a moment but for eternity. Even better than a carefree morning or a day of leisure, the joy that Jesus brings is an unfading and uplifting source of joy. We are compelled by this light to come and worship him. Why wouldn't we be glad to be here? For here we follow this light that calls that leads us to a wonderful place; a place, where God comes down to men to bless them, not with the treasures that fade, but with the treasures of an eternal kingdom. He gives gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. He gives gifts that we could never purchase, nor win, nor earn, nor search out and find on our own. For Christ alone holds the key that opens up God's treasure box of heaven. Christ alone is the key to forgiveness. He is the secret to a life of contentment and happiness for he brings us peace with God. Therefore, we drop what we are doing, we take up the road that follows him. We take up the journey that is not always easy. and we bow before the king of kings, thankful that his light has dawned on us, that his light has opened our eyes so that we may know the lasting joy that he brings. We bring our gifts to honor him who provided us with the gift that no one else could provide: eternal salvation. In joyful response to the gifts he gives to us we gladly give him our time, our efforts, our treasures, so that others may enjoy this good news of great joy that God has given to all people. This child is born for us, born as one of us, born to draw sinners close to a holy God, and to give us peace and joy that lasts for all time. There is no doubt about it, it is good for us to be here. Come let us continue to adore him, now and forevermore. Amen.