

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord  
St. Matthew 2:1-12  
January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

### They Offered unto Him Gifts

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

#### **Sermon Text:**

“And they came into the house and saw the young Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

#### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

O Eternal God and Father, Who hast revealed Thy Son as the only Savior from sin, and called us to the blessed knowledge of salvation, we thank Thee, that Thou hast hitherto preserved Thy truth among us despite all the wiles and assaults of the Wicked One; and we beseech Thee, keep us evermore in purity of doctrine, and send forth Thy Word among men, accompanying it with the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, that many may be brought to know Thy Son, and obtain the inheritance of everlasting life; through the same Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear friends, as was said yesterday, today's reading completes the reading from yesterday. Indeed, it is the beginning of yesterday's Gospel reading for the Sunday after New Year. Yesterday, we heard about the flight into Egypt, and the slaughter of the holy innocents by Herod the Great. Today, we hear about the visit of the wise men. Today, we begin the season of Epiphany. It is a part of the Christmas cycle, but this is a new season. The season of Epiphany is a season where our Lord + Jesus reveals Himself to be the Son of God. The Man + Jesus reveals Himself to be the begotten Son of the Lord God. This what "epiphany" means, it means "to reveal," literally, to "shine forth." The Christ shines forth for all those who cling to Him in faith.

This revealing of the Man + Jesus as the Son of God, begins with wise men from the East. In other words, it begins with the Lord + Jesus being revealed to the Gentiles. The wise men come from the land of Chaldeans. This is the same country from where Abraham was called by the Lord God. Abraham is called by the Lord God to come out of the land of Chaldeans, the land of false doctrine and false idolatry, to the land that He would lead him. He led him to the land of the Canaanites, this same country that is now, at the arrival of the wise men, the land of the Israelites. The wise men are called out of the land of Chaldeans by the appearing of a star in the East.

Often when the story of the wise men is retold much emphasis is placed upon them following the star from the East. But make note, the Scriptures do not actually support this aspect of the story. For St. Matthew points out that they saw the star in the East, and did not see it again until after the wise men were told that the Baby + Jesus was to be found in Bethlehem. They saw His Star in the East. Came to Jerusalem, and said, "We saw His Star in the East." And now St. Matthew says, "And they,

having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the Star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." So, they only followed the Star from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

The point of saying all of this is that the wise men saw the Star in the East, recognized it for what it was—the revelation that the Messiah had been born—and they made that trek to Jerusalem seeking Him. The Lord God leads them on the last bit of their journey so that they might find the Child Whose Star they saw in the East. In other words, they were led to the Child by faith. Just as Abraham, by faith, left his home and land in the East—he left the land of the Chaldeans—because He believed the promises of the Lord God. The wise men, too, leave their land of the Chaldeans in the East, and by faith seek the Child Who is born King of the Jews.

We are told that King Herod the First, and all Jerusalem, were troubled when the wise men appeared with this news of the birth of the King of the Jews. What is truly revealing about everyone being troubled by this news is that no one misunderstood this birth to be the birth of an earthly king. For, the chief priests and scribes were consulted to tell everyone where the Christ was to be born. That information was found in the Prophet Micah. The Christ would be born in Bethlehem of Judah. Herod and Jerusalem were not troubled that a baby had been born. They were troubled because the Christ Child had been born.

Which makes King Herod's slaughter of the baby boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding region even more evil. He did not just seek to destroy some child who threatened his throne, although that fear was real to him too, but he sought to kill the Messiah. The Messiah was the One Who was supposed to save and redeem Israel. King Herod sought to destroy the Savior of Israel. All because he wanted to secure an earthly throne. The Messiah's throne was foretold to be an eternal and everlasting throne. From an earthly perspective, King Herod would be displaced from his throne forever.

But our Lord + Jesus, the Christ Child, did not come to establish an earthly, but heavenly throne. He did not come to save Israel from its earthly foes, but He came to save Israel, and all mankind, from their spiritual foes. He came to redeem us back from sin and death. He came to defeat the devil, the world, and mankind's sinful flesh. He came to draw all mankind to Himself. He came because man had been trapped in the prison of sin and death by the devil ever since Adam and Eve committed the first sin. At that time, the Lord God had promised to send a Savior through Adam's seed. This promise was also given to Noah. It was given to Abraham, too. He was promised a great nation in he left the land of the Chaldeans and went into the land that the Lord God would show him.

The wise men also have the promise of a newborn King. They left their land of the Chaldeans at the appearance of the Star, and went into the land where the Child was to be born. Therefore, both the Jews and the Gentiles are called out of the land of false worship and false idolatry into a land flowing with milk and honey. Both Jews and Gentiles alike are called away from false gods, to serve the only True Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He has called us out of sin and darkness into the Promised Land of Heaven. He has called us out of this world to an eternal, everlasting Kingdom in Heaven. This promise is revealed in the Christ Child born in Bethlehem of Judah.

This Child is revealed to be the promised Son, the Savior of mankind. He is the One promised to Adam and Eve, to Noah, and to Abraham and Sarah. He is the One promised to be the Savior of the Jews. But He is also the One promised to be the Savior of the Gentiles, too. He is first revealed to the wise men from the East. With the wise men, the Lord God begins to call all Gentiles to Himself. He begins to call all Gentiles to Himself, because He reveals Himself to them first by a Star, and then by actually seeing the Child Who is the Son of the promise. The Messiah is revealed in the Baby + Jesus. He is revealed to both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews of Jerusalem were troubled at the hearing of the

birth of the Messiah. Only shepherds abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, rejoice at the birth of the Savior of mankind. They went and saw the Child and heralded that news to the surrounding countryside.

The wise men, Gentiles from the East, receive the news of the birth of the Messiah in a similar fashion. They saw His Star in the East, and with no other guidance—not even from a Star—went to the land of Israel to see this great thing that had happened. Upon seeing the Child, they fell down to the ground and worshipped Him. They gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They rejoiced in the birth of a Messiah, of a Savior from sin and death, by bending the knees and offering Him thanks and praise through their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

They opened up the way for all of us Gentiles to receive the Lord + Jesus as our Savior. Therefore, my dear friends, let us also bend the knee in worship of our Redeemer and Savior. Let us offer Him the gifts of praise and thanksgiving. We may not have gold, frankincense, or myrrh to present to Him, but we have our voices to sing His praise, and we have our bodies to bow and genuflect before His altar. For here at this altar our Lord presents us with greater gifts than the gifts of the wise men. For here we receive His Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of all our sins. Let us then come and receive His gifts that He desires to give to us. For, He has revealed Himself to us to be our Savior and Redeemer. He is the Christ, the long-promised Messiah, come to us to rescue us from sin, death, and the devil. We will give Him thanks and praise eternally in the heavenly Kingdom which He has established, and to which He will one day call us into. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*