

Bring Gifts to Your King

Matthew, a Preaching Series

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Bible Text: Matthew 2:1-10

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You're in Matthew 2 aren't you? We're going to begin reading in verse 1, follow along, please, as I read. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." How do you feel about reading a Christmas passage in almost June? "Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born." He sounds an awful lot like the pharaohs of Genesis and Daniel, doesn't he? King Nebuchadnezzar of Daniel said, "I'm going to kill everybody if somebody doesn't tell me the secret," and here is King Herod demanding. So verse 5, "And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea." Check your Old Testament. "For thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily," or privately, "called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared." Can you tell me when the star appeared? Because remember, supposedly when a star appeared, it meant when the king was born. That was the idea then back in the old astrology days is royalty is born when a star is born and I'm pretty sure most royal people still think that. I mean, anyway.

So, verse 8, "And he sent them," Herod sent them, "to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." The sense, at least in some of the versions, is that I might come with you and worship him also. "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother." By the way, there shouldn't be any question in our minds why they went to Jerusalem and why they went to King Herod to find this new king. Why wouldn't they assume it was King Herod's son? A new king born, right? And here they are coming to the king of the Jews who was Herod. He's the king of the Jews. He's in Judea. He's king; he would be the king of the Jews.

Imagine the wise men coming and saying, "Where's the new King?" That would've been popular. Probably Herod had no problem believing that he had a son somewhere. He was not a chaste man. In fact, someone said it would be better to name your dog Herod than to be in his family. He was not good. He was constantly killing off his sons that were competition for him. He had many, many, many female interests and he had many sons by them perhaps and he was constantly suspicious of them taking over his kingdom.

His mom was an ethnic Arab and his dad was a person of Idumea which is Old Testament Edom and so he's really basically almost a half Jew, perhaps, but in any case, he's the king of the Jews and here come the wise men. Why did they come to Jerusalem? Because that's where the king reigns and so they go to the place where the king reigns and ask the king, "Where is your new son?" basically. "Where is the one that is being born King of the Jews?" Naturally, that caused kind of an uproar in Jerusalem. They weren't happy because it meant another Herod was going to reign. Do you see how that works?

Alright so, verse 10, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him." That's the third time the word is used. Its used in verse 2 when they say that "we have come to worship him." In verse 8 when Herod says, "I will come and worship him with you also." And then now in verse 11, "they worshiped him." "And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts," here they are now, "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Gold, frankincense and myrrh. "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

Well, tonight I'd like to bring you a short message on bringing gifts to your King. Bring some gifts to your King. Bring some gifts to your King and my question immediately is: what could I possibly offer a king? He's a king. Am I going to lavish him with swimming pools and mansions? No. Am I going to give him palaces in his name? I cannot. What could I possibly offer a king? Why would God, I should say, let's just get right down in the present day context: why would a king want any gifts? Isn't it kind of like, you know, let's just say you're kind of up in the ranks of the Army, it's kind of like giving another coin. What do you do with it? You just put it under the glass on the coffee table after a while. I mean, there's really nothing to it. You're going to give me another, in the Army they call it AAM's? Good heavens, you line the cat box with them after a while. There's just not much you can do with them. What are you going to give me? In fact, God had that attitude in Isaiah 40, "What will you give me? Are you going to give me the islands? I own them. Are you going to give me sacrifices when I am the one that blows on the crust of the earth and up pop mountains? Are you really going to please me?" Psalm 50, "Don't I own the cattle on a thousand hills?" So what could you give God and so I ask you to, let's just downgrade that to just an earthly king. What could you possibly give a king? That's a good question.

Well, let's handle a housekeeping item: what time of year did this happen? Well, we did this recording around Christmas time and I bust a lot of bubbles, just offer the possibility that Christ was actually born in or near December. So I hope that doesn't cause you to

stop listening and start playing solitaire but it might. I just wanted you to know that it's not settled in stone that Christ was born in April like I heard growing up. By the way, Pastor Jonathan, he's involved with this too so you'll hear his voice in there.

So, first thing I want you to know about truth, about worship: there are timeless truths concerning worship. The wise men's timeless truths concerning worship. I have three of them for you tonight. 1. Worship is never deemed proper without an effort. It seems like I should probably be talking about what is worship because if we're not careful, we're going to put worship in church buildings on Sundays or Wednesday nights for the really, really worshipful people. Worship is used 11 times and it really means this: to lick someone's hand like a dog to his master. Now, think about that. That is the meaning of "worship" according to the several dictionaries I looked at but actually means "to do homage," and depending on the circumstances of the case, it means "to reverence somebody." So when we talk about worship, licking the Master's hand is never deemed proper without an effort. The mere word brings us recoil because we can't even picture ourselves squatting, kneeling, crouching, debasing ourselves to lick anyone's hand. That's what dogs do and I am no dog.

These wise men, imagine in verse 2 they said, "we have traveled all this distance," the east. It could be as close as present day Jordan, it could be as far as present-day India. We really don't know. Most people will say Babylonia but I don't but it doesn't matter. They came a long ways and it took some effort. As a matter of fact, they said in verse 2, "Our errand is simple, we have come from the east and we are actually coming to worship." How amazing would it seem that they would even consider worshipping in the east? They could have done that, you know. There could have been some sort of display of homage, licking the hand, so to speak, from a distance. Couldn't they have sent emissaries? Couldn't they have sent messenger boys? Couldn't they have sent royal diplomats? Couldn't they have sent an enclave of people to take the gold, the frankincense, the myrrh? Couldn't they have sent some kind of lackey to kneel before the new king and say, "I am here on behalf of the king of, and his name is, and I bring you his greetings and his worship?"

But that would've been unsuitable, improper. I mean, I'm not even going to act like they knew him as the Son of God. I'm not saying, but they had a certain reverence for the person they deemed as king of the Jews and if they were willing to travel miles and miles and to make a certain display of worship based on their opinion of the king of the Jews, if they can do that for who knows, maybe they considered the gods partly divine. You can read, we're not here to study Greco-Roman history but it doesn't take too much reading to realize that those guys had a healthy self-esteem. They usually felt like they were related to the gods and after they died usually they were promoted to godhood. But I don't find any evidence here that these men thought that Jesus was God in the flesh and they had the respect for this king of the Jews who I suspect they were expecting because of the words of Baalam the prophet in Numbers 24 who said that a star would arise out of Jacob. I don't know, but it would've been an absolute absurdity to say, "You stay home and worship there."

I know that I'm talking to the Wednesday night crowd. I understand that, and I know that we're not gathering in houses around Mary and Joseph and a toddler, yet we can say Jesus still has a body on earth and this body is not merely surrounded by his family but this body of Christ actually is his family. And it would be absolutely ridiculous for us to downgrade worship fit for a king where we come and gather around the Christ from a distance. Imagine on the Lord's day, imagine on the Lord's day someone saying, "I'm going to worship the Lord from the beach." Imagine saying, "We're bringing worship fit for a king two Sundays out of the month."

Secondly, real worship is never deemed appropriate by others who wish to have comparable notoriety. Worship is never seen as appropriate by others who wish to have like worship. Worship is never favorable for someone who wishes to be noticed a lot. King Herod was not happy that they were to worship the king of the Jews. Here's why, first and foremost, he was unconverted. First and foremost, King Herod needed to be saved. Do you know why Judas had a problem with the woman breaking an alabaster box of ointment and breaking it and putting it over the feet of Jesus? Because he needed to be saved. Do you know the reason why many people are uncomfortable when the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ, is getting worship? It's simply because they are going to hell. That's really why. We are dealing here with people who are uncomfortable with this thing known as worship. Worship. And what is worship? It is paying homage to someone. There are many among the sons of men that would give you a reason of why it is not fitting that others should receive honor or homage. They would rather see resources given to some grander, more notable cause than to simply bolster the renown of another sovereign. Let me say that again: they would rather resources be given to some grander notable cause than to simply bolster the renown of another king. "Couldn't that be given to the poor?" Judas said. Today Judas would say something like, "Can't we take that money we spent on that carpet and feed people? Couldn't we take that money that we spent on an air-conditioning unit for the church, after all we only use it," well, here we use it almost every day, but often people will say, "We should make metal frame buildings because we want multipurpose buildings because they didn't have church buildings in the New Testament." You're right, they also didn't have air conditioning yet you have it in your house.

And so this worship thing, it bothers Herod because now people are not paying attention to him and now we're seeing Herod just as he is because if you have a new king of the Jews on the scene, what does that mean about King Herod? His days are numbered and when you worship someone else, it means that when you worship God, when you worship Jesus, when you worship God in the flesh, it really means that everything else is just, well, temporary. Temporary. When you take out your Bible in the morning and you make the effort to journey from the east, that bedroom, and you come to that place where you enjoy meeting with the Lord in the morning, it takes a lot of effort. I'm not going to lie to you, there are many people that will stay in bed and there are days when I feel like staying in bed. But a show of worship says, "No, he's worth the journey. I'm going to go to that place with my Lord and I'm going to give him worship because everything else is very, very, very, very, very temporary."

You know, that phone? It can wait until you're done with your time with Jesus. Your email can wait until you're done with the King. Your Facebook can wait until you're done with your time with the King. Your Twitter can certainly wait until you're done with your time with the King. Your Instagram can wait until you're done with your time with the King. Your bank account can wait until you're done with your time with the King. It takes effort and people get upset when you are not willing to drop everything to give them your attention but check this out: long after everyone in this room is six feet under the sod if Jesus hasn't returned, the King of kings will still be King of kings and you will want to be well practiced in this thing called worship when you die. Our priorities matter, Sister Meredith. They so matter because everything else is just so temporary and King Herod had to look himself in the mirror and say, "You're getting older and you're not getting prettier."

But wait a minute, wait a minute, why were they worshiping Jesus? Did they have to worship Jesus? I mean, they didn't really even know that Jesus was the King, the Son of Man. They saw him as the King of the Jews, they saw his star and their astrology said that that meant that there was a king coming, but does Jesus become the Son of God when we worship him? Help me. Already is. Does he become more regal? More heaven sent? More fit for a cross? More unfit for a manger? More unfit for a barn? More unfit for Bethlehem? More fit for a throne? More fit for ascension? More fit for gifts because we worship him? No. No, no, we come to Jesus with worship because simply it is fitting. It is fitting. Fitting for a king. Fitting to the fulfillment of a promise. Fitting to the seemingly last ditch hope of mankind who strangely wasn't Plan B after all.

He was the plan since the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1 says. In fact, think about this now: before the curse came the cure. That is craziness to me. How in the world did God plan for the cure before the curse even happened? I don't know but it is true that Jesus was already marked on a calendar before there even was a calendar. Back in eternity past, that doesn't even make sense because the word "past" is a time related term. Eternity past. What does that mean? It's like saying eternity future. Eternity means no time and so sometime, well, I can't point that way, somewhere where there was no time. Some time when there was no time, Jesus was put forth as the cure for the curse and no wonder he's worthy of worship because long before we were even hatched on this mud ball, God the Father in the Word, the Son, had a relationship and they were completely complete. They needed no other and so do we pretend? Do we pretend for even a minute that somehow we're giving Jesus what he needs when we worship him? That the wise men were somehow giving Jesus what he needed when they worshiped him? No, no, but Herod does what a lot of people do when uptightness occurs around worship. Uptightness. It could be, oh, I'd better move on.

He pretended to worship and in chapter 2, verse 8, he said, "You go and search diligently for the young child and when you have found him, bring me word again that I might come and worship him also. I am going to pretend. I'm going to pretend to worship so that you don't see how much of an unworshiper I am." Are you with me? So many of us, we talk about how we worship to the point where I begin to wonder if we actually do. And I'm not going to say that Herod wasn't religious. I mean, go to a family reunion

sometime and you're not going to find an unreligious person. They're all religious. They all have their prayer books. Do you know how hard it is to find an unreligious homosexual? They all have their prayer books. They all believe that God created them that way. Have you ever met someone that, "No, I'm not a Christian. In America, no way. No, I'm a Christian. Hot dogs, apple pie, baseball and Jesus. That's what we're about and I'm on my fourth marriage." Pretense. You know, in England, it seems like everyone is Church of England and yet they have less than 3% church attendance. That tells me that on the Lord's day he's not worth the trip.

Now, I know that when we talk about worship, usually what we do is we keep veering off into this issue of praise because we can't fathom worship without praising so since you're probably most of you are beating me to that, let me go ahead and meet you there. I am blown away by the fact that some people still get uncomfortable about Jesus being worshiped in this building. I hope this doesn't get out of hand. I hope we don't have any wildfire in this place. Are you kidding me? There are so many wet blankets there's no chance of a wildfire breaking out in here. I heard one loudmouth say that he could worship Jesus with his hands in his pockets rocking back and forth on his feet staring at the wall. Are you kidding me? Is that how you cheer for your baseball team when they hit a walk off homerun? Blame it on your personality when you won't even so much as point to the heavens or raise your voice in honor to the Lord before this holy Kingship. Not because he needs it but because he is worthy of it and all of a sudden when it comes to getting excited about Junior scratching up your new mower, you get loud. Interesting how that fits your personality. Are you with me? I haven't made you mad, have I? We shouldn't pretend.

Last: worship is never deemed complete without gifts, gifts that are fit for a king. Gifts that forecast his fate. Notice what they brought him, please, in verse 11, "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Gold, the gift of a king. Frankincense, can anyone tell me about frankincense? It's found a lot in Leviticus, that should narrow it down. Yeah, it's usually offered with sacrifices by the priests so, you know, gold, when you think of gold, you think of rich leaders, right? You think of a king. When you think of frankincense, you should be thinking about a priest and when you're thinking of myrrh you should probably be thinking about bitterness, a prophet. I'm afraid that I kind of looked past that when I preached a few weeks ago on Jesus the anointed one. I'm afraid I should have taken you here and shown you that all three offices of the anointed one are represented in the gifts that were given to him. All three of them: prophet, priest, king. Gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Do you remember what Jesus said right before he made a great cry and yielded up the ghost? I understand that it depends on which Gospel you read. I'm not saying they're out of order, I'm saying some add detail that others don't have. Do you remember that it says that he thirsted? Do you remember that? And you remember what they brought him? Water mingled with gall or myrrh and apparently that had a way of deadening the senses. Apparently that had a way of sort of adding some sort of painkiller idea to it. So what

was it forecasting? Can you imagine this being offered? You are here a king so here's some gold. You're a priest, so here's some frankincense. You are a prophet, so here's some myrrh. Were these wise men actually men of faith that believed that Jesus really was the Christ and that this king...? Perhaps.

"Out of their treasures," now that's pretty important. The reason that's important is because, let me just run some things by you. What does it cost for us to offer homage to our King? What do we lay at his feet once we are before him? With the same analogy of gathering around our King, we could say, "Are you a consumer?" In other words, "Are you here tonight because you have to be on campus to have children in Awana or did you come to be around the King and to leave a gift for him?" Money, no, you notice we didn't take up an offering. That doesn't mean we won't accept one, that means we didn't take one. Energy spent in praise, did you spend that tonight? Did you leave it at his feet? Did you spend energy in thinking and loving him with your mind tonight or, "Boy, he's really laying an egg up there behind that pulpit. I wish he would close it down and land the plane." I'm with you. I've heard some sermons like that before.

But what gift have you brought for the King? What thing? What vice? What weakness? What sin do you leave here at his feet in humble repentance? If he really is with us tonight in a very clear and feelable sensational way where you can sense his presence, then that means that you are before the presence of a King and I ask you, "What have you left him tonight? Is it just another exercise or did you bring something to him?" You know, the only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin. That's all we contribute to him. What will you leave him tonight? I'm sorry, we're in a church culture. I have churches every now and then email us and they're very kind but they call us teachers. It drives me nuts because I don't mind being a teacher but it takes away kind of the urgency of the hour like, in other words, I could get up and I could just kind of give you a lesson and you could use it tomorrow or Friday or next Thursday or whatever or listen to it tomorrow and that would be fine, but what it does is it kind of takes the office of a pastor or a prophetic voice and kind of puts it more towards a utilitarian sort of textbook kind of reference where when I'm having difficulty with my marriage I'm going to find a sermon on marriage. But what we lose is this urgency where, "No, tonight, May the whatever, 28th, is that right? I have come into this house before my King with a particular need." I mean, we won't even lay aside a Sunday anymore. We come home late on Saturdays exhausted and then when someone says, "We missed you in Sunday School." "Well, we were kind of tired." I mean, come on. We don't lay anything before our King. It's like Saturday night is just kind of like come home late from the stock car race and just, it's okay.

No, no it's not anymore. No, it's not anymore. It's not okay to treat the King like any old time is good for worship and any old gift is good for him and any old time I come to the church, maybe I'll hear something I can use and I'll make some pretty notes and I've got six steno notebooks up on my bookcase so that I can say I've been in church for 30 years and never missed a beat and I read my Bible through every year, but I want to ask you tonight, "What gift are you leaving at the feet of the King?" It might be you need to just leave your nothingness. Do you feel empty? That is a gift before the King because he said

four chapters later, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God." Do you feel used? Leave that at the King. That is your goal. That is your sweet smelling frankincense. That is the bitterness of your myrrh. Will you leave it before your King? Or will you walk out the door burdened again? "I don't know where I'm going to find my next job." Lay it at the feet of the King. That is your myrrh. It's so bitter. There's not but one person worthy of bearing such bitterness and it's the King. Dance before your King. Kneel before your King. Lay your debts before the King. And why is it? Because somehow it becomes more kingly and more regal, more Son of Mannish? No. No.

Look at chapter 6, verse 19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Why? Verse 21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." When those wise men laid gold, frankincense and myrrh before a toddler King, guess what they were leaving there? Their heart because where your treasure is, that's where your heart is and some of us fill our days, fill our schedules, fill our minds with nothing but strife and worry and anxiety and if we lost that today, we wouldn't know what to do with ourselves. Our hearts are set on discontentment and anxiety and fear and the next fight we're having with another person that if God were to snatch that out of our lives, we wouldn't know what to do with tomorrow. I will say to you that some of us in this room tonight need to hear this. Some of you just love anxiety because it fills your day. Some of you love discontentment, it fills your day. Some of you love uncertainty, because it fills your day. Your heart is there. You couldn't bear to leave it before the King. That's your gold and you would never say you treasure it but the fact that you won't let it go shows everyone that that is your gold, that is your frankincense, that is your myrrh. You can't bear to give it to the King because then what would you do? What would you do then? You would enjoy his presence.

Stand with me.