

Be Wise Men and Women

- 1) Searching for Christ in the Word
- 2) Honoring Christ in Our Worship

January 6 – Epiphany!

- 1st, happy new year – first worship of 2019. 2nd, happy Epiph! Today Fest Epiph; I'm very excited bec this year Epiph falls on Sunday. Just like Xmas always 12/25, Epiph always 1/6 (today). Epiph is fest of Xian church where we commemorate Magi visiting Christ-child. And since Magi Gentiles (non Jews), Epiph also celebrates how Jesus is Savior not only of Jews but also of Gentiles, people of world, people like you/me.
- Let's clear up confusion re these wise men. Sometimes hear song "We 3 Kings of Orient Are." Don't know 3; Bible doesn't say 3; 3 on bulletin cover; 3 crowns in Epiph window; but we get 3 from 3 gifts; don't know 3. We do know not kings. And if think "orient" as Asia/China, not from orient. Magi were class of scholars in palace of kings of Persia. Scholars, academics, maybe scientists; experts in med, chem, mathmat; and of course studied rel, astron (see today). Scholarly, wise men. Really don't know much else about them, except this: in lesson they say, **vs. 2b**. Followed star read about in OT; searched for Jesus; once found, worshiped their Savior. Sound like wise men to me! Had true wisdom – worth imitating in our lives. So today, on Fest Epiph, instead of just hearing re Magi, let's be like Magi. Let's be wise men/women, searching for Christ in Word, honoring Christ in our worship.

Be Wise – Searching for Christ in the Word

- To be wise man/woman means first: search for Christ in Word. What Magi did; studied OT. Otherwise wouldn't known God would use special star to signify birth of Messiah. But **vs. 2**. Studied the OT; knew prophecies re coming Messiah; and came to believe that this Son of David was their Savior. What's so remarkable: Jewish Scriptures. These men weren't Jewish; could easily have said: this book, nothing to do with us. But instead, HS worked faith in their hearts as they searched for Christ in Word. Magi were believers; read OT, and even knew re an obscure passage in Numbers: "**A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel**" (24:17). When saw star, knew time had come for the King to be born. Wise men; searched for Christ in Word.
- King Herod on other hand: not wise. Did not search for Christ in Word. Had others do it for him. **Vs. 4**. Replied: Bethlehem, town 6 miles away from Jerusalem. This got Herod nervous, bec didn't want any competition for throne. So Herod did search Christ, not to worship but kill. Later in ch (Mt 2), we read horrible account of Herod sending soldiers into Bethlehem to murder all little boys 2 and younger. So what you have: Herod, on one hand, who lives among Jews, in Jerusalem, right by temple/prophecies, only 6 miles from birthplace of Savior – he searches for Jesus, to kill him. On other hand, Magi, who lived over 600 miles from Jerusalem, nowhere near center of Judaism – they search for Jesus, to worship him. Truly they were wise men: they searched Christ in Word, and found him in Bethlehem.
- If we want to be wise men/women like Magi, we also need search for Christ in Word. Need be students of Bible – Bible readers, Scripture searchers! Can't take Word for granted, like Herod did. Want study it, like Magi did. Study of Scripture was incredibly important to Magi. Needs to be incred imp to us, as well!
- Back in Sept, we as cong made big push for our Sunday Bible classes. We started up Adult SS, on top of reg adult Bible class – so now 2 adult classes running same time. And also shored up our youth SS program, so now PK-HS (FYSH). So almost every Sun between services here at SJ, we've got Bible study for every age group. Made big push this year; I think we've seen some success; numbers up. But there's long way to go! Lot of you don't come; lot of you don't bring kids to SS. What you want me say: that's good? No! I have this vision for us as church family where Sun AM is 2 hr event: worship and Bible study. So whether you're an 8er or late-r (1st/2nd), you stick around with family between services for Bible class and SS. And we visit together: have cup coffee, snack together. Did you know: we even bring in GB donuts sometimes – right down hall, by school, right on way to class. We've got schedules posted all over building. Adult SS covers same lesson kids learning, so families can discuss it lunch. Today we go back Gospel John in Adult Bible class. And if just can't make Sunday AMs, that's okay. There's Wed AM Bible class. And you can certainly have own pers Bible study time in own home.
- But point: if we want be discs of Jesus, need be students of his Word! If we want be wise men/women like Magi, have to study Bible, searching for Christ in Word.

Be Wise – Honoring Christ in Our Worship

- And to be wise man/woman also means honoring Christ in our worship. Magi certainly did that. **Vs. 11** – very expensive gifts! They loved Jesus as Savior, honored him as King – with expensive gifts. This's a lot of money

they give Jesus: spared no expense: worshiped Christ with their wealth. Not only that: made huge long journey to see him. Trip from Persia to Bethlehem over 600 miles: would have taken weeks! But Jesus was worth the journey. So with their trip and treasures, they honored Christ in their worship.

- Do we honor Christ with our worship? Do we show Jesus how much he is worth to us? I know family that used to drive over an hour, one-way, every day, to get their kids to a Lutheran school for Xian education. Then on Sunday they'd make long trip again to church. To them, Jesus was worth the trip. I also know people who take Xian financial stewardship very seriously; they set up their family budget so that can give sizeable offerings to their church – a % of income, given regularly, out of love for Jesus. To them, Jesus is worth the treasure.
- Every one of us needs to think about how we can honor Christ in our worship – thru trip & thru treasure. Never let trip to church become drudgery. Magi travelled 600 miles to Bethlehem, to see Jesus. When you come to church, you get to see Jesus. He is here, in W&S. You get to see, receive Jesus – that's why you come. Make that a priority in your life – to come church, see Jesus. That's the trip.
- Now the treasure. Jesus: **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt 6:21)**. And, **“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7)**. And cheerful giving from heart means planned giving – not a last second, post-sermon decision. But in your home, as you plan out your budget, you say: Jesus is a priority. And you plan on giving regular, generous, %-based, gospel-motivated gifts – bec Jesus is worth the treasure. You can think of it like this: when you give your offerings, it's basically same thing as Magi bowing down, opening up box of frankincense before Jesus. Magi gave Jesus best; we want give Jesus best too – generous offerings from grateful heart.
- Honoring Christ in our worship also means having hearts our prepared. We should come to church prepared: to think about hymns we sing, words we speak in liturgy; to listen carefully to sermon; to focus during prayers. Don't let yourself just go through motions of worship. Come prepared; come focused; don't let yourself be distracted. I know: lot of distractions that can happen during a worship service; got to try to tune that out. Or maybe when you come to church, its not fav liturgy, or fav hymns; or maybe don't like instrument, or don't like preacher – these can be distractions! But we've got to focus on Jesus – that's why we come church; why Magi came to Bethlehem. So try not to let anything divert your attention/worship off of Jesus.
- Worshiping Jesus means: to believe in him as cruc/risen Savior from sin, to thank/praise him from heart, and to give him our best – bec he's worth it! He gave up everything, to give us everything. He gave up life on cross, to give us forgiveness of our sins. He gave up heaven, to give us heaven. Jesus spared no expense to save us.
- And the Magi got that – not every last detail of Holy Week; he's just baby when they meet him. But still: they believed in Jesus, and honored him in their worship. And if we want be wise men/women, like the Magi, then we need honor Christ in our worship, as well.

Be Wise Men and Women – Like the Magi

- Today, as celebrate Fest Epiph, as we once again follow star with these mysterious Persian Magi, who travelled many miles to meet their baby Savior-King: let's be like these Magi. Let's be wise men/women, who search for Christ in Word, and honor Christ in our worship – bec when we do that, then we will be truly wise.

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 ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose 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 Messiah 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 shepherd 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 search carefully 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 when it rose 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, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.