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Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² 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.”

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 Christ 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 be the shepherd of 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 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.”

⁹ 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. 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 and of incense and of myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (NIV 84)

Theme: Follow the Magi to the King

1. They were told about the Messiah
2. They Studied the Word.
3. They came to worship him.

The last few years you have heard a lot about logistics. If you are unaware, logistics is the coordination of a series of complex events involving many people, places, and objects—it’s what all goes into so

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something happening. A few years ago UPS started showing commercials about the logistics it takes to send a package anywhere in the world from anywhere—what all goes into to ordering an item, packing up that item and shipping it, tracking the package, and arriving at its destination on time. Logistically speaking, there is a lot that goes into sending a package.

The story of the Magi is one many of us know. Just think of the logistics it took for these Magi to worship the Christ Child. It was no small undertaking; logistically speaking there was a lot that went into it.

And that is still the case for you. So today, follow the Magi to the King and you will see that the logistics are the same for you as it was for them.

We don’t exactly know where the Magi were from. We know they came from the east, but that is about as much as we know. Some believe they could have been from Persia or Arabia—both east or Palestine, but we can’t say for sure. What we do know, however, is that they came from a distance away from another country. They were Gentiles. They were not Jews. They were not part of God’s chosen people.

And yet they knew about the Promised Messiah. They knew that a child would be born who would be king of the Jews. Did you ever think about how the Magi knew about this? Someone must have told them or people they knew. At some point in time a Jew who knew about the Promised Messiah who would be the king of the Jews must have told someone in their country this great news. Someone had to have shared the gospel promise of a Savior. The Magi didn’t know about this by themselves, someone shared the Word with them.

How did the Lord bring you to faith? Through the means of grace, of course. Through the gospel in Word and sacrament. For many of us it was when our parents brought us to the baptismal font. That through the waters of baptism the Holy Spirit worked faith into our hearts, washed away our sins, and welcomed us into his family. For others maybe it was a friend or a family member who shared God’s Word with us. We were told about the forgiveness of sins through Christ’s perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection.

The point is that someone somewhere down the line had to share the Word with us. They had to tell us about Christ so that the Holy Spirit could work faith into our hearts. If they wouldn't have done so then the Holy Spirit wouldn't have been able to bring us to faith and we would still be spiritually dead. As Paul asks, **How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?**

So what does that mean for us? It means that we should want to share the Word with others. But we often hesitate to do just that. Why? We are too scared. We are afraid of what people may think of us or what they might do to us. We want to avoid confrontation, we don't like making people upset, so we find it better not to say anything about faith or religion. Or we just not confident that it will work. We think to ourselves, "There is no way this person will believe or even listen to me, so I'm going to save my breath and not waste my time." But rather, we are Christians realize that the Holy Spirit works through the gospel. So we do all we can to share the gospel with those we know and support others to spread the gospel to those we do not know. After all, if someone decided not to waste their time or breath with you, the Holy Spirit never would have brought you to faith and you wouldn't be here today and you wouldn't be with Christ forever when you die.

So logistically speaking, what first needs to happen to come to the King? The gospel needs to be spread so the Holy Spirit can bring to faith.

The Magi didn't know everything about this child to be born. Their knowledge of him was probably quite limited. After all, they didn't even know where the Messiah was to be born. The chief priests and teachers of the law, along with most other Jews, were easily able to recall that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem according to the prophet, Micah.

But what they knew and had access to, they must have known and studied—or at the very least remembered and treasured. For instance they called this child to be born the King of the Jews. Can you come up with a passage from the Old Testament that tells us about the Messiah would be a king? There are a few of them. Jeremiah 23:5

comes to mind, **"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. As does Zechariah 9:9 a passage we mention every Palm Sunday, Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

They also knew that a star indicated to them that the Messiah, the king of the Jews was born. Where is that exact prophecy in the Old Testament? Truth be told, we aren't exactly sure where what they were thinking, but it seems as if they had Numbers 24:17 in mind, **I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.**

The point is this. They knew and studied the Words of God that they did have. And through that Word, which they treasured, they believed that a little baby boy was the King of Kings, the Savior of the entire world.

They knew and studied the word. But when they didn't know something, they weren't afraid to ask someone who did or might know. They were searching for the truth, for more information on the King.

The application for our lives is obvious. When we follow the Magi to the King we follow their example of studying God's Word. That means getting into the Word as often as you can. That means reading his Word at home, by going through your Bible or devotional books. It includes making time to attend Bible Study on Sundays or Thursdays—or better yet, both. You want to know as much about Christ and his Word as you possibly can and the more you are in the Word the more your knowledge and faith in the King will increase. And when you don't understand a passage, you can search the Scripture for the answer. For you were given something the Magi didn't have—God's complete revelation readily available to you at all times. And you can also do as the Magi did—ask someone who does know, or who can figure it out for you.

So logistically speaking, following the Magi means to read and study the Word.

Following the Magi to the King also includes following them to worship the King, something you are doing today. Just think of what it took for the Magi to worship the Christ Child. We don't know exactly what these men did for a living, but they very well could have left their jobs and livelihoods behind, not to mention their wives and children. They traveled through foreign countries, walking or perhaps riding on animals for hundreds if not thousands of miles. They went through all that trouble simply to go and worship Christ, the King. And when they got there they gave him gifts. They gave him gold—always considered one of the world's most precious metals. And they gave him frankincense myrrh, two different resins made from dried sap of different plants. They were used for numerous purposes. And again these weren't cheap gifts. They gave him the best of what they had to offer—holding nothing back.

Again, the application to our lives is obvious. Let us follow the Magi in worshipping our King. Let us put aside everything that hinders us so that we may worship and Praise Christ the King. We want to make it a priority both now and throughout our lives to worship the Lord—to sing the praises of our God and king. If that means giving up something—friends, family, fun, or whatever, then so be it. And let us follow the Magi in the gifts that we give to the Lord. Let us give the best of the best of what we have to offer. And we do so not because it's expected of us, but because we want to. Because he is the King of kings, the long Promised Messiah—the Savior of the world. We willingly give graciously to him out of love and thanks. We give graciously to him because he has revealed himself as the Savior of all nations.

Think of the logistics it took for the Magi to believe Christ was the King and for them to come and worship him. The same logistics still stands. The gospel was shared with you and the Holy Spirit brought you to faith. You remained in the Word and the Holy Spirit strengthened your faith. And motivated by his love and grace, you make it a priority to worship the King. Follow the logistics—all taken care of by the Lord. Because of him you will arrive at your destination—your heavenly home. Amen.