

Epiphany 2020
Matthew 2

² Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ “ ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

In the Name of Jesus.

Beloved, we are the Gentiles—and we do not belong to God! At least, we DID not belong to God, until God appeared to the Gentiles.

I mean the real God of course! From conception, all men—Jews AND Gentiles—have BELONGED to, been addicted to, we are ENSLAVED to all sorts of things that are NOT the Living God, but

TO WHICH we look for support and help and security: things like gold, not to mention frankincense and myrrh!

(‘Oooh!! If I only had a pile of money! What power I’d have!’ I was so pleased to hear brother Fred tell me—now a couple decades ago!—‘Pastor, I don’t really want a pile of money, lottery-like. But things would be a lot easier in life if I could get about \$412.00 more a month!’)

So, when is it a need, something for which to pray for, to the Living God, with, always, ‘Thy will be done’? And when is the NEED—WHAT...WE...LACK.... ‘another god before Him?!’

Rejoice, O Gentiles! Rejoice, O nations! With the Magi from the East, no matter HOW they got there, WHAT that star is all about! (Got ‘em CLOSE! Micah 5 got ‘em CLOSER! The mix of them got them to...)

‘And led by light, to Light they trod/And by their gifts confessed their God!’

What God? ¹¹ *And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.*

What a Child! Who was not only worshiped FIRST by those who from Abraham’s day have been OUTSIDE looking IN; but Who then—baptized, mocked as King, then risen from the dead, went all this way:

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” ¹

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 28:16–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Can you and I just be serious for a second? Let's try to forget our threadbare-worn FAMILIARITY with the notion of a toddlin'-God! By 'familiarity,' I also mean 'CONTEMPT!'

Who TALKS like THAT?!!!! AGAIN!::

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My dear ones: honesty is still, often, a very good policy. At moments of honesty, dear Xians among us have confessed to this poor pastor:

'I think people have been prepped to know that, as SOME POINT, you're going to get going on about Holy Baptism again in your little Sunday Book Report! It's natural to think, then: oh, there he goes!'

I pushed myself forward, as much as I could get away with—INTRUDED, I will say, into the realm of His Majesty, my grandson, Samuel Paul. He's about toddlin'-Jesus size right now. And for a good week, I prayed with whatever earnestness I could pretend to have, that God would teach me—even ME!—the Gospel again, from one who, by the authority of Jesus, has been baptized, and already been taught to pray to God as his own dear Father.

Yet there were times—OFTEN; DAILY AND MUCH!—that my insides wandered, followed others shiny objects, stars, worries, future-isities???

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 28:16–20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Time again, my dear ones, to learn from the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther. (Ah! We knew THIS could be coming, didn't we?!)

We're gonna wake plagued by idols, other gods before the Toddler. And we're gonna fall asleep hounded by demons, worries, 'grownups'-stuff.'

Samuel Paul let me know when I was not engaged with Himself. Didn't change from being Himself.

You'll know when you are not engaged with the King, the Toddler, the Wise Men's Joy. He grew up to teach:

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. ³

At that point, make the sign of the holy cross over yourself, repeat, ‘In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ Then, recite the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and Luther’s morning or

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 6:25–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

evening prayer. Then, if there's still daylight, meditate on the Commandments. (Because we're still in a world run, OUTWARDLY, by fearful men like Herod. Best to behave!)

The Promise of Jesus, the Joy of the Toddler, is that HE is never going to stop being Himself. So, just be YOURSELF in the Name of Jesus. Amen.