

**“This Is Jesus: King of both the Jews and Gentiles”**

There’s a popular show that Sarah and I have been watching over the last year called “This Is Us.” (We are a full season behind so don’t feel obligated to fill us in :-). The series follows the lives of Jack and Rebecca Pearson and their three kids Kevin, Kate, and Randall. It takes place in the present when the kids are grown up, but it uses flashbacks to show past family history to help understand joys and challenges of the present. A key storyline is how the life and death of their husband/father Jack, when the kids were 17 years old, has impacted their lives. In a sense that is what we do during the season of Epiphany. We live in the present as followers of Jesus and we flashback to Jesus life on earth in order to gain a deeper appreciation of who Jesus is and how he impacts both the joys and challenges of life. During the next 9 weeks we will worship under the theme – “This Is Jesus.” Today we focus on how Jesus impacts us as the King of both the Jews and Gentiles. 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 <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: <sup>6</sup>”**  
**“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.”**

**<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.**

There is so much we would like to know about these wise men. How far from the east had they traveled – 500 miles, 1000 miles? How many of them were there – 3 or more? What is the specific meaning of their gifts? Was this a special star or just a regular star that God used

to lead them to Jesus? How and why did they want to come and worship Jesus? Were they already Christians, a remnant of people influenced by Daniel 500 years earlier or were they God fearing people, but not necessarily Christians, who were wanting to know more about a special birth they had been told about? The Scriptural account of the Wise Men is cloaked in mystery as it presents questions that we cannot answer. It seems God wanted it that way because the Scriptural account of the Wise Men isn't about them, but rather it's about the one they came to worship – Jesus. Through the Wise Men God teaches us something very important, something very comforting – **“This Is Jesus: King of both the Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews).”**

All those questions we have about the Wise Men really don't matter. What is important is that they came. Correction, God led them to Jesus. God uses things in nature to do that. A conscience that is burdened by guilt. The beauty and power of nature. Birth, joys, problems, and death. Stars and planets and galaxies. People just wondering what the meaning of life is and how I got here. God uses nature to lead people to Jesus, but nature doesn't provide all the answers. **“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> 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”** (vs. 1-2). The natural knowledge we gain about God from our conscience and nature is helpful, but it is limited. So where can a fuller, more revealing knowledge about God be found? **“When he (King Herod) had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ‘In Bethlehem in Judea,’ they replied, ‘for this is what the prophet (Micah) has written’: ‘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’”** (vs. 4-6). It's only in the Word of God that God reveals more to us about the most important thing we need to know – about Jesus. And what God reveals through the wise men is this, **“This is Jesus: King of both the Jews and Gentiles.”** Jesus isn't just a gift for lowly Jewish shepherds. Jesus is a gift for upper class Gentiles as well. Jesus impact upon lives transcends race and social status. And it's always been like that. Yes, maybe that message wasn't as clear before Jesus came as after he came, but that message has always been in existence since the time of Adam and Eve, before Abraham, during the life of Abraham, and after Abraham. God makes that clear with the Wise Men coming to Jesus that as King Solomon said, **“All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed”** (Psalm 72:17). And that is great and comforting news for us as well. As far as I know, none of us here has any Jewish lineage. We are all Gentiles, like the Wise Men. But listen to the message of Scripture that God says each of us can embrace as our own: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”** (Romans 1:16-

17). Gentile sinner, because of Jesus God is not ashamed of you. Rather, when he looks at you he sees your faith in Jesus and he considers you to be righteous, someone he is proud of now and eternally.

Jesus is our King. He rules in our hearts by faith so that we live each day in the peace of forgiveness. He has defeated our enemies so that we have no fear of Hell or death because we know we are destined for Heaven and resurrection. King Jesus provides for every last one of our physical and bodily needs. How does one respond to such awesome leadership? I'm sure the Wise Men were blessed people, but their lives had problems too. I'm sure they got some weird looks and endured some mocking from family and friends as they went on their long journey. And when they arrived in Jerusalem, nobody was really prepared and excited that this king had been born. Instead they were disturbed because they were more concerned about how King Herod, the one who killed some of his own children to protect his throne, would respond to this news and how would that effect their lives. I'm sure the Wise Men had their own problems and struggles and worries. I'm sure all of those things made it tempting to not be overjoyed and to not worship Jesus and to not offer him gifts of thanks. Don't we have the same obstacles today? Being a Christian in this world can bring with it weird looks and mocking. The influence of the world around us to be earthly and ungodly is strong and enticing. Are the problems and struggles and worries of life causing you to be angry and depressed rather than joyful? If a visitor came to your home today and observed your home life – would they come away with the impression that Jesus is your King who is ruling here? If a visitor came to your work or school this week and observed your life there would it be obvious that Jesus is your King guiding you and influencing you in positive ways. If a visitor came to our church and observed our worship, Bible Study, and ministry efforts would they come away with the impression that we are excited that Jesus is our King? The honest answer is “no, at least not fully and not all the time.” But there is King Jesus, in that moment of failure and guilt, ruling with a word of forgiveness. **“For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death”** (Psalm 72:12-13). So I will ask it again, how does one respond to such awesome leadership from King Jesus? How about this response. **“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route”** (Matthew 2:10-12). The Wise Men didn't let any of those obstacles stop them from being overjoyed, from worshipping Jesus, from offering him gifts of thanks, and from following a different path than the rest of the world wanted them to. Let us follow their lead. Amen.