

We hope this morning at LifeConnection is a blessing as we continue in our new series through the gospel of Matthew. Over the last few weeks we have seen how Matthew has been introducing us to the person of Jesus through the lens of Jesus as Messiah. That he is the promised Messiah King who has come from the Jewish line of Abraham and King David. Matthew is making the case for his Jewish audience, and us, that the promises given to God's people throughout the Old Testament, every covenant made, every prophecy that has been given, has been leading to this person Jesus the Christ. He is the climax of God's redemption plan. He is Jesus whose name literally means - the one who will save his people from their sins, and through him we will dwell with God forever as he came as Immanuel, God with us. There is no greater person in history than Jesus Christ the Messiah King. This is who God's people are supposed to have been waiting and looking for. But as we enter into Matthew 2 we are going to begin to see that what Israel says they want and what their hearts actually desire may be 2 different things. There is a new king, the promised king who has been born in Jesus, and what should have come with trumpets and fanfare seems to be met with troubled hearts, suspicion, and even secrecy. So as we read the first 12 verses of Matthew 2 let's examine our own hearts for who we believe Jesus is for us today -

[1] 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.

Have you ever tried to walk across a room in your house in the dark? You are tired and confused, but convinced it is familiar enough that you should be fine to make it across the room. For parents with children, you remember that moment when you have laid the baby down and

you are just praying you don't step on that one squeaky floorboard or some toy and inevitably you run into a coffee table or stub your toe on a chair. No matter our familiarity with the room, without light, we just can't clearly see where we need to go or avoid. In a similar way, our hearts are like this dark room we are trying to make our way across. They are familiar to us in some ways, but there are emotions, thoughts, and beliefs that are like legos on the floor waiting to destroy our feet as we try to navigate them.

The scriptures tell us that our hearts are desperately wicked and deceitful above all else - who can understand them? No matter how insightful we may be, how much time we may give, we will forever struggle to understand our own hearts and minds. They are trying to deceive us through justifying our own actions or motives, and in our sin it is trying to convince us that being familiar with who we are is enough. That we don't need to look too closely or think too hard about that anger or resentment we are holding. We don't need to consider the direction of our life or what we believe - everything is fine. But when Jesus enters into the realities of our hearts and minds, it is like a 1,000 watt light bulb is lit in our hearts. Every part and crevice of who we are is exposed. The clean parts and the not so clean. The dirt and grime of our sin and unbelief become so much more apparent. The light of the gospel of Jesus helps us see clearly the reality of who we truly are and what we believe. Even at his birth Jesus was doing this work - revealing the hearts of all who know of him and those who should have been expecting him.

Matthew, in chapter 1, begins laying out the case for Jesus being the promised Messiah King. He uses Old Testament people and Old Testament prophecies to begin pointing to his legitimacy as the one they have been waiting for and looking for. Yet, as the news of the birth of this promised Messiah comes to Jerusalem it isn't met with cheers or excitement. What we see in the first couple of verses is the very people who should have been looking for and longing to see him return weren't even the ones who noticed. Read v. 1 again - **[1] 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.** In the days of a king was born a king - The King, The Messiah - And as the news of his birth begins to spread, the light of Christ begins to shine on the hearts of all there, revealing who would worship him and who would not. Matthew is showing this morning that - Jesus is the rightful King, worthy of our worship. But as we look at these 12 verses there is a clear juxtaposition made between the Jewish people who should have worshipped him and the Gentile, foreign wise men who actually did.

It is almost comical in some ways to watch Herod and Jews react to this news from the wise men. They tell Herod they have come to find this king of the Jews because they have been looking for his star and when they saw it they came to find him. But here in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life and worship they are met with confusion and distress over this news. **V. 3 says - When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;** - Herod is not a Jew but was a ruler installed by the Romans, so we can understand why he is troubled by the news of the true and rightful King being born, but it is interesting that Matthew points out that all of Jerusalem was troubled too. The very people that should have been

anticipating his coming, looking and waiting for his birth weren't, and in fact they were troubled, just like Herod, to know he had. But if Jesus is the rightful King, then we should be ready to worship him. If Jesus is the promised Messiah, the one who would redeem them, save them, forgive them, bless them, then his people shouldn't be troubled by him, but ready for him. They should be looking for him so that they could put him on the throne. Matthew even points out in v. 4-5 that the religious leaders knew exactly where the Messiah should be born and come from (Bethlehem as was prophesied), but they weren't all there anticipating his return. Jesus is fulfilling prophecy after prophecy, but what we see in this moment is that Jesus is shining a light on what their hearts truly wanted - and it wasn't him. Yet, the wise men, these Gentiles and people who shouldn't care about this "King of the Jews" were watching and waiting. And when they see the star, they leave their homes and travel miles and miles to find him to worship him. They were ready to worship him as this promised king!

It reminds me a bit of the parable Jesus tells later in chapter 25 of Matthew and says -

[1] "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. [2] Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. [3] For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, [4] but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. [5] As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. [6] But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' [7] Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. [8] And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [9] But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' [10] And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. [11] Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' [12] But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' [13] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. - Matthew 25:1-13

When we look at our lives are we men and women marked by readiness to worship Jesus? Are we devising new ways to love the Lord and give our lives to him in worship? Or are we the foolish women in the parable who are unprepared for the coming of our king, unprepared to live for him and worship him. We often prepare our homes and days around a Chiefs game, buying food, cleaning our houses, and clearing our schedules, ready to watch. Do we do the same amount of work to prepare ourselves to be with the Lord? Maybe it means we need to clear our schedules and have a Bible reading plan ready to go so that we can spend time with the Lord. Jonathan Edwards once said - *"We can't say that we have not the time to mind the affairs of our souls because no business is of such importance that it ought to crowd out godliness."* Matthew wants us to understand that there is something momentous in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is God in flesh, come to dwell with us and be with us. To know us and walk with us. He is worthy of everything, worthy of our entire lives! But so often we miss this because we are on our phones doomscrolling or watching YouTube. We have distracted ourselves or numbed ourselves to his beauty and glory with the glory of lesser things! Don't get me wrong, I enjoy my TV and I love watching football, but when we are troubled or frustrated by the time we feel like the Lord is asking of us to give to him, to hear from him, to talk with him, to serve him, we have

to ask whether we actually believe he is worthy of that or not. He is worthy of our readiness to worship him.

The wise men continue to show us what it looks like to worship the rightful king by rejoicing in him. Read v. 9-11 again, Matthew writes - **[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.** When they find him they rejoice exceedingly with great joy! They were deliriously happy that God had led them by this star to the king they had been searching for and longed to see. They immediately bring out gifts and riches and bow down and worship this long searched for King of the Jews. Matthew here is trying to call us back to King Solomon in the Old Testament who is one of the greatest kings, and whose fame spread so far and wide that the Queen of Sheba, in 1 Kings 10, travelled from afar to bring him gold and spices and the greatest of gifts to honor Solomon. In Jesus we are being shown that we have here a king greater than Solomon. But where the wise men rejoice exceedingly and bow down and worship King Jesus, Herod plots to remove him. He asks the wise men secretly to bring back news of this king. This isn't a plan to join in worship, but to remove a threat to his place of power and prominence. This is a threat to him being worshipped, to his identity, to what he finds most important, and Jesus' entrance into the world is shining a light on this reality of his heart. He isn't willing to give up his life for Jesus, but instead wants to end Jesus' life.

If there is anyone in this world who should be marked by an unquenchable joy in the coming of Jesus it should be disciples because we have found in him our salvation. We have found in him our greatest joy, our satisfaction, life abundant! We should be excited! This is the treasure in the field that when you find it, in your joy you sell everything you have to get it (Matt. 13:44). The presence of King Jesus in our lives, ruling and reigning should lead to a great joy because in him we find something much better than this world or our sin has to offer, but we don't always believe that. Like Herod, when we come to Jesus sometimes he begins to threaten the things we worship, the things we hold more precious than him. We let Jesus rule over some parts of our lives, but there are others that we might have better ideas on or that he isn't allowed to take away. So when following Jesus threatens my time or identity - my goals and my dreams for my career or for my family - all of a sudden Jesus isn't the king we rejoice over but regret following and try to remove him from that part of our lives. We try to relegate him to other parts of our lives, just the church part or the religious part, but he doesn't get to be a part of these things like my identity, my family, my job. But Jesus isn't meant to tarnish these things in our lives, he is meant to make them more beautiful. C.S. Lewis talks about it this way -

The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts

of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.

Our kids, our spouse, our jobs - all these things in our lives aren't necessarily bad things but they were never meant to be god things. They will betray us and leave us wanting. If we put the pressure or weight on them to be our joy, to satisfy our lives they will fail and be crushed under that kind of weight. They are only the fragrance, not the flower. Jesus is the flower. The glory of God is seen and known in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). He will satisfy every single longing of our hearts, he will fill us with a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:9) - Jesus will do this! This is why we should be rejoicing - we have found him who our soul has been longing for and looking for. We have found our king and everything reminds us of his kind and good rule. We get to taste the greatest of food, see the most amazing views and in it we can agree that we can taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. 34:8). We see beauty and it points us back to him and we rejoice in seeing him and his work everywhere around us. When Jesus is truly ruling over every area of our lives everything becomes better and more beautiful because Jesus came to restore and redeem. Like the greatest of filters, he brings life, vibrancy, and freedom to everything. Jesus didn't come to destroy our joy and life, he came to give them abundantly (Jn. 10:10). It is the power of sin, the realities of death that Jesus came to destroy. It is Satan and our flesh that are threatened by the rule of the rightful king because he has defeated them through his own death. When there are threats we feel in our hearts to Jesus it is the vestiges of sin and its rule in our hearts wanting to cling on. But we must expel them with a greater and more powerful affection because we have something far better in Jesus.

Jesus is not the kind of king who rules on a throne from afar, but is Immanuel, God with us. He came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He left his throne and entered into life with us. He was rejected by men, acquainted with grief and sorrow because the approval of mankind wasn't his goal - it was our approval before God. It is our grief, our suffering, our rejection he took upon himself so that we could have the greatest of joys in being loved and approved by God. Jesus is the best king, worthy of our worship and our lives because he gave his to save ours. He, the King of the Universe, died on the cross in our place and for our sins, not because we chose him or loved him but because he loved us and longed to see his Father glorified through saving us. And the greatest of news is, this life we are living is just the beginning. Our King is returning, he is coming again to make all things new. This life is still just the echoes, the fragrance of a life that is to come where we will see our King and live with him face to face. There is no other king like King Jesus, he is worthy of our readiness and our rejoicing because he is worthy of our worship.