



Part 5: Unexpected Worshippers

Matthew 2:1-12

What type of worshipper are you?

Epiphany Sunday: Within church tradition, the first Sunday after January 6 marks Epiphany Sunday. It brings the Christmas season to a close and marks the day the Magi visited baby Jesus.

What type of worshipper are you? This sounds like a deep spiritual question, but in fact it is a very human question. For we are all worshippers; we all worship something; we all attribute ultimate value and greatness to something.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
Matthew 6:21

A disciple lives in union with Jesus to learn to live joyfully in God’s beautiful Kingdom.

Worship is for All People

- Magi: Historically we don’t know the details about the Magi besides what is depicted in the scriptures about the Magi. Most likely they are Babylonian magicians and astrologers/astronomers.
- Interesting and possible theories:
 - The Magi were worshippers of the one true God in Babylon and influenced by the writings and prophecies Daniel who resided there when Israel was exiled. Daniel’s prophecy in chapter 9 speaks of seventy sevens and sixty sevens until the anointed one appears. Some calculated this to the time of Jesus’ birth and the stars identified a new king and guided the way.
 - Or maybe these Magi were idolatrous astrologers just following the stars. This is shocking for the Jews, for as depicted in the Old Testament, astrology was considered a form of idolatry.

“Whatever one thinks of the Magi – as sincere and so literally ‘following their lights’ or as idolatrous and so captive to superstition – one thing is clear: God in great kindness leads them to his Son.”
The Christbook, Frederick Bruner

“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.” Matthew 2:2

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him.” Matthew 2:11

- This continues Matthew’s theme that in God’s kindness, love and providence, he flips the prejudicial systems of the world upside down and desires for all to know Him. Matthew started with the four Gentile (non-Jewish) women in the genealogy and now we see this invitation to Gentile astrologers. This shows Jesus is God’s rescue plan for all people.

“...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:3

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight...to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.” Isaiah 42:1,6

“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” Luke 2:10

- And now, more than 2000 years later, some estimate that there are 2.2 billion Christians in the world. Through the church and thousands of sacrificial missionaries, the hope of the Messiah King has been made known around the world and many are worshipping Him.
- Unfinished Task (Joshuaproject.net): There are still 3,050 unengaged unreached people groups where there is no active church plant.

“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” – John Piper

Worship is Christ-centered

- Christ-centered worship does not start with us; it starts with Jesus. It is all in response to his magnificent beauty, love, and glory.
- Christ-centered can be seen in the posture of worship of the Magi: sacrifice, joy, reverence, and gratitude.
- **Sacrifice**: “Magi from the east.” Matthew 2:1
Some scholars guess that it was a trip of 900 miles over 50 days at great expense to themselves. To what extent do we sacrifice to worship God?
- **Joy**: “When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.” Matthew 2:10
God does not want our worship to be all about sacrifice. The Magi probably travelled with hopeful joy. God desires for our

primary motive be joy in response to the magnificent beauty, love, and glory of God.

- **Reverence:** “to bow down.” Matthew 2:11
The Magi showed reverence and submission to the child. This is in significant contrast with Herod who desires to be exalted and in control while the Magi, most likely wealthy and esteemed in their own country, humbled themselves by bowing down to worship God.
Gospel rhythms: glory of God, gravity of sin, and grandeur of grace.
- **Gratitude:** “They opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11
The Magi gave that which is precious to them to the one who is worthy to receive all praise. In response to all of who God is and what He has done for us, we show honor and thankfulness by giving gifts to Jesus: our time, money, and gifts.
- Worship postures of sacrifice, joy, reverence, and gratitude.

“The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.” – John Piper

- Worship postures of sacrifice, joy, reverence, and gratitude.
Where do you need to start?

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you view the Magi prior to this sermon? What new thing did you learn about them?
2. If you are honest with yourself, how do you see Herod in you? Where do you desire control? Do you ever try to exalt yourself?
3. As God invites us to the party to worship Him, in which worship posture (sacrifice, joy, reverence, and gratitude) do you need to grow? What would it look like for you to sacrificially worship God? Does your life and worship exude joy? How can you be more reverent in your worship? How can you be more grateful in your own life?