

The True King and the Star
A Story of Worship and Resistance
Second Sunday of Christmas 2025
Lessons: Matthew 12:1-12, Isaiah 60, Ephesians 3
Harry Kent Bergeron, Jr., Pastor, All Saints Reformed Church

The world was weary in those days. Rome's power stretched far and wide, and under its shadow, smaller rulers like Herod clung to their thrones with fear and suspicion. But far beyond Rome's reach, in lands where wisdom-seekers studied the heavens for signs of meaning, something extraordinary happened. A star appeared, bright and compelling, calling these seekers to leave their comforts and embark on a journey. This wasn't a journey for political gain or scholarly curiosity—it was a search for the one true King.

These travelers, the Magi, were not Israelites. They were outsiders, Gentiles, people whose customs and worship were far removed from the God of Israel. Yet God, in His mysterious wisdom, used the language they understood—the stars in the sky—to draw them into His story. The star was no accident, no coincidence. It was the Creator's deliberate sign, lighting up the heavens to announce the arrival of the King who would set the world to rights.

As they journeyed westward, the Magi carried with them precious gifts, the kind you would bring only to a ruler of unmatched significance: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were no ordinary tokens—they spoke of a King, a Priest, and a Savior whose life would be marked by glory and sacrifice.

The Clash of Kingdoms

The Magi's journey eventually led them to Jerusalem, the seat of power for Herod, the self-proclaimed "King of the Jews." They asked a question that shook the palace to its core: *"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."*

Herod, a ruler who owed his fragile throne to the Romans, heard this and trembled. This was no mere inquiry. It was a direct challenge to his authority. A new King? Born under the sign of a star? Herod, always paranoid, could not tolerate even the idea of competition. He gathered his advisors, the chief priests, and teachers of the law—those who knew the Scriptures inside and out—and demanded answers. They pointed to the prophet Micah: *"But you, Bethlehem... out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."*

Herod, cunning and ruthless, sent the Magi to Bethlehem with a deceptive request: *"Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."* But Herod's words were dripping with malice. His intention was not worship but destruction.

Now consider the dramatic irony. The religious leaders, armed with the Scriptures, knew where the Messiah would be born but showed no urgency to seek Him out. Herod, consumed by fear, plotted against Him. Meanwhile, the Magi—foreigners with no covenantal claim to Israel's

promises—acted with bold faith and determination. The arrival of Jesus, even as a child, was already dividing hearts, revealing those who would worship and those who would resist. God had been turning his attention to the Gentiles for a very long time now as could be seen in the letters to the Gentiles nations from Isaiah, and consider the enormous not considered blessings for the Gentiles – the surrounding nations – were given for the Jews to be forced into leaving their homeland and engaging with the surround nations in ways they never before did – we learn the enormous influence this had on the Gentile nations through prophets like Daniel and others, and this was a real duty of theirs to be a light – a priestly people – to the Gentiles and God would have his way.

The Journey to Worship

The star led the Magi to Bethlehem, and when they arrived, they found the child with His mother, Mary. What happened next is breathtaking in its simplicity and power: they bowed down and worshiped Him. These wise men, men of status and knowledge, knelt before a humble child in a very ordinary place. They recognized in this child what Herod and the religious leaders could not—here was the true King.

Then they opened their treasures:

- **Gold**, the symbol of kingship, acknowledging Jesus as the rightful ruler of all creation.
- **Frankincense**, the fragrance of priestly worship, pointing to Jesus as the mediator between God and humanity.
- **Myrrh**, the spice of burial, foreshadowing the suffering and death through which He would fulfill His mission.

These gifts were not mere presents; they were proclamations. They told the story of who Jesus was and what He would do. Even as a child, His identity and destiny were clear: the King who would bring God’s justice, the Priest who would reconcile humanity to God, and the Savior who would give His life for the world.

God’s Sovereignty Over the Powers

But the story wasn’t over. Warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the Magi took another route home. Herod’s dark intentions would not prevail. God’s purposes would not be thwarted. The true King had come, and no earthly power, no scheme of man, could stop Him.

And here is the true heart of the story. The birth of Jesus is the declaration that God is King. It’s the unveiling of His kingdom—a kingdom that doesn’t operate by the rules of Herod or Rome or any Kingdom that establishes itself against the kind of kingdom operates against the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. It’s a kingdom of light breaking into the darkness, of justice overturning injustice, of peace shattering the grip of violence and fear filled with subjects who’s principle in all things is love – for one another and their God and King. This is the story of God becoming King.

The Fulfillment of Isaiah's Vision

Let's consider Isaiah 60: *"The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."* The star that led the Magi was a foretaste of this reality: the light of God shining in the darkness, drawing nations to His glory. The Magi's journey was a fulfillment of Isaiah's vision, a sign that the promises made to Israel were now spilling over to the entire world.

The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

And let's consider our Epistle lesson here too - Paul's words in Ephesians 3:6 proclaim a revolutionary truth: *"This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."* For centuries, God's covenant with Israel had seemed exclusive. But through Christ, the hidden plan of God—to include the Gentiles in His promises—was unveiled.

The visit of the Magi in Matthew 2 offers a glimpse of this mystery in action. These wise men, Gentiles from a distant land, are the first recorded non-Jews to worship Jesus. They saw His star in the sky, left their homeland, and followed the light to bow before the King of the Jews. Their journey was not merely personal—it was a declaration that the promises made to Abraham and his descendants were now being extended to the nations.

Paul's declaration in Ephesians 3 makes it explicit: through Christ, Gentiles are no longer outsiders but fellow heirs with Israel. They share in the same inheritance, belong to the same body, and partake of the same covenant promises. This mystery, hidden for ages, is now revealed in the gospel. And the Church since Pentecost is the full blossom of what Israel was always destined to become – an in Christ led by the Spirit New Creation People that would bring in all nations.

The Magi as a Foretaste of the Gentiles' Inclusion

The Magi's story is not an accident of history; it's a prophetic act. These Gentiles traveled to Jerusalem seeking the one born King of the Jews. Their journey reflected the words of Isaiah 60:3, *"Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*

By their actions, the Magi affirmed the truth Paul would later articulate: the Christ child was not only the King of the Jews but the King of all nations. Their gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—symbolize the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan. They brought treasures to Jesus, just as Isaiah prophesied that the wealth of nations would come to God's people (Isaiah 60:5-6).

In this light, the Magi's worship becomes a powerful symbol of what Paul describes in Ephesians 3: the Gentiles, once far off, are now drawn near through Christ. Our ancestors at this time are no longer strangers but partakers in all the promises of God.

The Cosmic Scope of God's Plan

Ephesians 3:10 – a text I have often spoken about from this pulpit - reveals another dimension of this mystery: *“So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”*

The inclusion of the Gentiles isn't just a human reconciliation; it's a cosmic declaration. The Magi's journey to worship Jesus wasn't just an earthly event—it was a sign to the spiritual powers that God's plan was unstoppable. Herod, in his attempt to kill Jesus, represents the earthly powers that resist God's kingdom, but the Magi's faithful journey shows that God's purposes will not be thwarted.

Let's consider this text a bit more with this theme. Ephesians 3:10 speaks of God's *manifold* wisdom—translated from the Greek word **πολυποίκιλος** (*polypoikilos*), where we get our word polychromed meaning “variegated” “many-colored,” “diverse,” or “infinitely intricate.” This word evokes the image of a tapestry woven with vibrant, distinct threads, each color adding to the beauty of the whole. God's wisdom is displayed in the Church—a garden- and variety of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, uniquely shaped by their cultures and histories, yet united in Christ all worshipping him. The Church is not a bland, homogenized mixture but a radiant, polychrome masterpiece that reflects the infinite creativity and glory of God. This is what the dark forces of the world—the rulers and authorities established after the Tower of Babel incident—sought to prevent. Appointed as rulers over divided nations, they resisted God's plan to bring all peoples back together in Christ. But God's eternal purpose has always been to take the diversity of the nations, formed through their scattering at Babel, and unite them in a glorious harmony, showcasing His wisdom and beauty through their distinctiveness. The Church, therefore, is the fulfillment of this plan—a living, breathing proclamation to the powers of the heavens that God's wisdom will prevail and that unity in diversity is His ultimate victory bringing beauty to the forefront of his wisdom.

Through the gospel, God's wisdom is displayed not only to humanity but also to the spiritual powers in the heavenly realms. The unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ demonstrates that God's plan for redemption is far bigger than anyone imagined.

Implications for Us

So, what does this mean for us today? The Magi's story and Paul's teaching in Ephesians 3 call us to marvel at the grace of God that welcomes all people into His family. No one is excluded from the promise of salvation in Christ.

For those of us who are Gentiles, this truth is profoundly personal. We are part of God's family not because of our heritage or works but because of His grace. Paul emphasizes this in Ephesians 3:8, calling the inclusion of the Gentiles *“the unsearchable riches of Christ.”* The gospel is not just for one people—it's for the whole world.

For the church, this truth is a call to mission. Just as the star guided the Magi to Jesus, we are called to be light-bearers, pointing others to the true King. The unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ challenges us to live as one body. In a world fractured by division caused by dark forces, the church's unity is a testimony to the reconciling power of the gospel.

The Invitation to Worship

Further as we close out this exhortation - the Magi's story ends with worship. They bowed before Jesus and offered Him their treasures. Paul's teaching in Ephesians 3 reminds us that we, too, are invited into this worship. Through Christ, we have boldness and access to God (Ephesians 3:12). The mystery of the gospel isn't just a theological concept—it's an invitation to draw near to God and give Him our hearts and our lives and our work – our very best as subjects but also fellow heirs of this glorious kingdom that doesn't look as healthy as the history books painted it and the old buildings and music and art prove it once was but that's a problem we have to correct as a people and a church –but amazing things always began with small beginnings and a few people who with big dreams seek to honor Christ in their community.

As we reflect on the mystery announced by Isaiah, revealed in Ephesians 3, and illustrated in Matthew 2, we are called to respond like the Magi. They left behind everything to seek the King. They bowed in humble adoration. They gave their best gifts to Jesus. May we do the same, knowing that through Christ, we are fellow heirs, members of His body, and partakers of His promises.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost - Amen