

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-**  
**Sermon by**  
**Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**Epiphany of the Lord Series**  
**January 6, 2013**  
**Matthew 2:1-12**



2.1 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 when it rose 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 Messiah 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 shepherd 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 search carefully 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 when it rose 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, frankincense and 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.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

The world will not pay much attention: but today is Epiphany! Today is the Epiphany of the Lord Day! Today – January 6<sup>th</sup> is sometimes called Gentile Christmas – the day we remember the visit of the wise men. The powerful reminder that Jesus came not only to save the children of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah. Jesus came to save everyone everywhere! Jesus died for all! This is God’s Word and God’s truth!

Every year about this time – there are long lists of special people who died this past year. John Demjanjuk died at the age of 91. Do you know who John Demjanjuk is? John is a retired auto worker – who made cars by Cleveland, OH. John was from the Ukraine. John was accused of being *Ivan the Terrible* – a horrible and sadistic guard at a death camp called Sobibor. John stood trial for what they call “*crimes against humanity*”! Do you appreciate what that means – crimes against humanity? It’s like something so terrible it is an assault on the whole human race! It’s a crime so horrible it offends humanity! John was in court for the better part of 30 years – always saying this was a horrible misunderstanding. That his accusers were confused – mistaking him for someone else! Finally John was convicted of being accessory to 28,060 murders. Again – what would be a fitting penalty for being part of the murder of all those people? Would this not be what they like to call a *hate crime*? *Enhanced penalty*? It would be just shy of 55 years – if John served one day for each of his victims! Do you know what he got? 5 years – total – 5 years! One, two three John was out – spending his final years in a nursing home – doing what? Reading large print books – watching *The Price is Right* and *Jeopardy* and the *Wheel*? I don’t know if John was guilty or not. It’s certainly not for us to judge. But this is certain – Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus will judge the living and the dead. And there will be no fooling Jesus – ever! This Epiphany Day – God’s Word reminds us:

### 1. ~~Wise People Still Seek Jesus~~ **Wise People Still Seek Jesus**

**2.1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod,** There was more than one King Herod. This King Herod became known as Herod *the Great*! That’s nice – and so? Like Alexander the Great! There aren’t too many people where that’s your tag – the great! So – what was so great about Herod the Great? He built an aqueduct by Caesarea that is still there today! What do you know we have built that is over 2,000 years old and still good? Do you think 3<sup>rd</sup> street will be here in 2,000 years – or the interchange that goes to Mitchell Field? Lambeau Field? Miller Park? St. Luke’s? I don’t think so! Herod also built the fortress Masada – at the top of a cliff – where if you stand there – you can watch an Israeli fighter jet fly by below you – *below* you! Herod rebuilt Solomon’s Temple to the point that people called it Herod’s Temple! Herod also did something else good – he melted down a bunch of gold from the palace to

buy food to feed the poor during a time when there wasn't enough bread to eat! That's pretty good – and so? Herod the Great “was also cruel, merciless and jealous. He had his wife's brother, Aristobulus the high priest, drowned and then pretended to mourn at the magnificent funeral he paid for. He had his own wife Mariamne killed, as well as her mother and three of his sons. Shortly before his own death, Herod had the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem imprisoned and then gave orders that they should all be executed at the moment of his own death. In that way he would ensure that there would be mourning in the city at the time of his own death. He feared otherwise there would be only great rejoicing! How sad is that?”

**2.1 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 when it rose and have come to worship him.”** Magi were wise and learned men – maybe 3 – maybe name *Casper, Baltazar and Melchior* – maybe not. Magi very likely came from Babylon. During the 70 years of captivity in Babylon – Daniel was placed in charge of the Magi. Magi were known to be priests, astronomers and astrologers. They knew about the stars and the planets. And so they would be the first – according to God's plan – to see a most miraculous star in the east – to follow it – to worship the Messiah – the one promised long ago. Surely almost 600 years before the fact – Daniel would have told the wise men of his day – that the LORD would keep his promise to send the Savior! The stars and the planets – what wonders in the sky. This past year *Sir Patrick Moore* passed away. He was pretty much self-taught expert about the stars and the planets. He had a TV program that began when I was in Kindergarten – and was last broadcast the night he died. One of his friends when told of Sir Moore's death said, “May he rest in peace – somewhere in the universe!” Somewhere? Somewhere in the universe? I will never forget Samuel – the nurse at WRMC – who heard someone say they were not afraid to die because they would go to “a better place”! Samuel said, “A better place? You are going to Heaven! Say it! Say Heaven! That's where you are going! You are going to Heaven to be with Jesus forever!”

**<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. Disturbed!** The Greek word *ἐταράχθη* means troubled, distressed, anxious, an inward commotion--to stir up. King Herod was

disturbed because he was paranoid. Disturbed because he loved earthly power. There are lots of people who long for earthly power! Some of the richest and most wealthy people in our country are willing to spend literally millions of their own hard earned dollars – to try and become the President or a Senator or a Governor! Why? Have you ever wondered? They crave earthly power! They want to be able to say, “Don’t you know who I am?!” Look at the hair of people in elected office. Very quickly it turns grey then white from the stress and the pressure of what they try to do. Again and again there is frustration – as they cannot make happen the things they believe in. In a position of power – say the Ambassador to Lybia – and there is an attack and you are murdered. The President – nor his wife – nor his children cannot go anywhere – without the Secret Service – to protect their very life. Lincoln was shot – Kennedy was shot – there were attempts on President Ford’s life--President Regan was wounded! And all this – so you can do what? Have authority over armies that are bogged down in wars. Have authority over taxes. Have authority over roads and bridges and green energy? What matters is the Word of God – the Kingdom of God – not a place – but a kingdom in the hearts and minds and lives of God’s people. The Kingdom of God will endure forever! Jesus will rule through all eternity. That’s what matters. Jesus’ forgiving love is what counts! If you think about it – Jesus’ forgiving love is all that counts! Nothing else matters! One moment after Judgment Day begins – all that will ever matter – is Jesus’ forgiving love!

**<sup>4</sup>When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah 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 shepherd my people Israel.”** The Christ-child would be born in Bethlehem. Every single Christmas service – Sunday School – the Day School – someone reads from the scroll of the prophet Micah – that the Christ child would be born in Bethlehem. Beth-Lechem – house of bread – a place that must have been famous even very long ago – for fresh baked bread. Beth-Lechem – where a man named Jesse had a whole bunch of sons – the youngest named David – anointed by the LORD – oil poured on his head by faithful Samuel – the King to replace faithless and rebellious King Saul. This is what Micah the prophet wrote. If you went to Heaven

today – and the first person you ran into – was wearing a burgundy gown – with a long grey beard – and a staff in his hand – and he introduced himself – welcome to heaven – I am Micah – yes, thee Micah. What part of my scroll did you like the best – what would you say? In the days of Micah there was gross wickedness – even to the point of prostitution – paying people for “hugs and kisses”. People selling “hugs and kisses.” It was so terrible – God’s discipline would be so painful – Micah wrote, **“Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. For her wound is incurable...”** It was almost like a nervous breakdown – a total collapse – because of the spiritual hurt and harm. We could say to Micah – our country and our families were under terrible attack. But we, too, put our hope and trust in the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel – who kept his promise to send His Son to save us! In Jesus alone there is rescue and hope!

**<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, frankincense and 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.** Ray Bradbury died this last summer at the age of 91. Ray Bradbury wrote a Science Fiction novel called Fahrenheit 451. It’s called a dystopian story. That’s the opposite of a utopia – where everything is good – a dystopia is where everything is messed up. Fahrenheit 451 is the temperature at which paper will burst into flames. In Bradbury’s story – it’s against the law to have books – and in the future firemen – will set your house on fire – if they find books in it! They say the phrase *spoiler alert* – is overused – so I won’t use it – but *spoiler alert* – what about all the irreplaceable books – the ultimate book – God’s Word? People preserve these books by memorizing them! It can be argued – the ultimate Bible you own – is the Scripture – the Bible verses you have memorized! The day may very well come – when you can’t read your Bible – no matter how large the print. How much of God’s Word do you know by heart? How many verses have you memorized? This new year – why not memorize more and more of God’s Word – that you might be eternally wise? Wise people will always seek their Epiphany Lord. Amen!

*Rev. Anthony E. Schuttz*