

Reading: Matthew 2:1-12 (NT page 966)

Reader: Robert Gardiner

Sermon

11 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.

In our reading Matthew speaks of the Magi who is also mentioned in the Old testament in Daniel chapter 2. In the context of our reading they would have been astrologers who followed a star from the East. The East could have been Babylonia or even Arabia. Popular traditions have portrayed them as three in number, although Matthew does not say so, because of the three gifts (2:11). Later, post biblical, traditions have also supplied names (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar).

Matthew is making a very valid point that magi who was non Jewish reacted to God's message to them by coming from a very far place to pay homage to the Christ while the most religious Jews who was close by did nothing of the sort. It would be the shepherds who was not trusted by the religious leaders and the gentile magi who came and paid tribute to the new born king.

They brought gifts fitting for a king, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold off course was just as precious as it is now and frankincense and myrrh were fragrant spices and perfumes equally appropriate for such adoration and worship..

Matthew is making a very valid point even to us today. The whole message of Christmas is emphasized in our reading. God is merciful and loving, even reaching out to men who had never before heard of Him. God found a way to speak to them, through a star. He gave them the

opportunity to worship Him. God abandons no-one. No-one is ever out of His radar.

The second point Matthew is making is that the magi were committed to find the Christ. They went through great trouble to find out where this special person is. And they obeyed God although the story, even when God spoke to them through a dream warning them not to return to the king.

So they were committed and obedient to a God that they did not even know. And they even worshipped Him with precious gifts.

So what about us? Most of us do know God, know that He did not stay in that manger but that He actually grew out of the manger, became a powerful MAN who resisted fame, and honour and gave His life on a cross at Calvary. Most of us know the real Easter story of Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead and who prepared the way for us all to inherit the kingdom of God. Most of us have experienced God's working through His Spirit.

But if you are sitting on this Watchnight service and have not heard God's loving voice...just listen, you are hearing it all around you. If you are sitting here and you think of yourself as too much of a sinner, think of the Magi. Jesus came for all the sinners - for you and me. You are not beyond God's loving touch...

And follow the star to Bethlehem and beyond as you celebrate and worship the baby Jesus in the manger tomorrow/later today. Follow His star as you journey through life, offering Him not just material things but your very self, remembering the sacrifice he made for you on the cross. And always carry with you the living hope that God overpowered death. So be jubilant and rejoice because the Redeemer has been born, Immanuel God with us...

May God help us all not only to commit ourselves to the baby Jesus but to follow His only Son Jesus Christ through life...

Amen