

Let Earth Receive Her King! (Part 2)

Matthew 2:1-12

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Well, last week we began to study this passage together, the story, of course, of the magi, and let me just remind you, as we've just read it a moment ago, that the theme of this passage, reduced to its simplest form, is this, Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah and Earth's only rightful king. Now, last time that we met together, we really just looked at the introduction to this story in the first couple of verses. First of all, we discovered the story's setting. Verse 1 says, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king." We discovered that the magi were not, in fact, at the birth of Jesus on Christmas day 2,000 years ago, in spite of all of our nativity sets and all of our wonderful Christmas songs. They actually arrived, likely, somewhere between 40 days after His birth and less than two years after His birth. So the story's setting is pretty straightforward.

We also looked last time at the supporting cast. I pointed out to you, and it's really important for you to understand, that Jesus Himself is the main character of this story. But next to Him, the magi are the key characters. So who were these men? Again, verse 1 simply introduces them as, "magi from the east who arrived in Jerusalem." By the way, magi is the correct pronunciation, so that's why I'm using it with you, in case it sounds strange to you. These men, the magi, were, in fact, members of a Persian priestly caste who were teachers of science and religion. In science they studied astronomy and medicine, mathematics and philosophy. Their religion was Zoroastrianism. They were pagan idolaters who were involved in practices that the Old Testament clearly forbids, practices such as astrology, divination. But this cast, these men, likely came and were part of God's providential direction at the birth of His Son because they had one unique duty, even in their home country, and that was to anoint future kings. And that's why they factor so prominently in the story of the birth of Jesus.

Now, why did they come? Well, verse 2 tells us that they came with this question, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." They weren't coming for the birth of just any king. They weren't looking for the man who would succeed Herod the Great. No, they understood something more to be

involved here and this becomes clear down in verse 4. Because when Herod hears about their questions and their arrival, Herod begins to inquire of the spiritual leaders of the nation, notice verse 4, “where [*the Christ*] the Messiah was to be born.” So these men, the wise men, had come to Jerusalem because they were convinced that Israel’s divine Messiah, the one who had been promised in the Old Testament, the one who would rule the world, that He had been born.

Now, how would they have known? How did they even know about the Messiah? Well, again, as we discovered last time, for 600 years, since the Babylonian captivity, devout believing Jews had lived among the Babylonians, where these men likely came from, and had shared with them their Scriptures and the promise of a coming Messiah. And I also think it’s impossible to overestimate the impact that Daniel had who, remember, became ultimately the prime minister of Babylon and, of course, his prophecy, as we noted last time, has so much to say about the Messiah, and so they understood so much as a result of that influence.

Now, all of that was really just our introduction last week. On this Christmas morning, I want us to come to the heart of this remarkable story. You see, these men showed up in Jerusalem and announced the birth of the king of the Jews, specifically the Messiah, and the rest of the story focuses on the responses of people to Jesus as king, the primary ways that people respond to the biblical Jesus, in all times and in all places, even as they did after His birth. In fact, think of it this way, this account serves as a kind of mirror in which each of us can see ourselves. You are in this story. I am in this story. Because we see ourselves reflected in the responses of the people of that day to Jesus and His birth as king.

So let’s consider then the responses that were then and measure ourselves against them. First of all, consider the typical responses to Jesus as king. We could say, the typical sinful responses to Jesus as king. First of all, the typical response of most we could simply call, settled indifference. Notice verse 1, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying.” Now the word saying in the flow of this story is a very interesting part of how this unfolds, because the verb saying makes it clear that this wasn’t a question they asked one time. This was a question they asked repeatedly. Now, why is that? Because they didn’t go immediately to Herod. Their first meeting with Herod doesn’t come until verse 7. Instead, you’ll notice verse 3 says, Herod heard

about the wise men. That implies that he heard about them second hand. So instead of going to meet with Herod, when the wise men arrived in Jerusalem they went about the city, enquiring among the people, and the response of the people of Jerusalem was settled indifference.

Jerusalem's population at that time, not at feast times when the population swelled, but in normal periods of time throughout the year, historians tell us about 80,000 people lived in Jerusalem. It was not a small city by ancient standards, but not one person from the entire city seemed interested in whether these men had actually found Israel's rightful king. The magi showed up announcing the birth of the Messiah, and the people of Jerusalem didn't know anything about it and frankly didn't seem to care too much. You can see why this response is true in all times. Our world is filled with people on this very Christmas day who are either ignorant of their rightful king or utterly indifferent to Him. They have holiday meals to prepare. They have parties to attend. They have family gatherings to enjoy. They have creatively found a way to celebrate Christmas while ignoring Jesus Christ and His right to be their king.

My question to you this morning is, is this a reflection of you? Do you find yourself in this response of most of the people in the city of Jerusalem? Do you live your own life blissfully indifferent to your king? The reasons for that are many, but I think the root cause is always the same. It's because people have no real sense of their own sinfulness and their own need. If you're diagnosed with life threatening cancer, everything else pales in comparison. Everything else becomes relatively unimportant as you fight that disease, because it threatens your life. Your life is at risk. The same thing is true spiritually. When you come to understand your real spiritual situation and condition, then you're willing to come to the person who can treat it. But because most people are unaware of their true spiritual danger, they remain indifferent to the only one who can rescue them. One typical response to Jesus is shown by the people of Jerusalem in that day, settled indifference toward our rightful king.

A second, typical sinful response is the response of the religious. We'll call it religious distraction. Look at verse 4. Herod, in verse 3, after he hears the report of these men, and we'll deal more with him in a moment, but he gathered together, in verse 4, "all of the chief priests and scribes of the people, and he began to inquire of them where the *Christos*," "where the Messiah," the anointed one, "was to be born." Herod calls together a high convocation. The

chief priests mentioned here included the ruling high priest at the time, all former high priests, those who had previously served, as well as the heads of the 24 courses of the priests, and key members of other noble families there in Jerusalem. In other words, these were the political leaders of the nation. And the scribes, mentioned also in verse 4, these were the spiritual leaders of the nation. They're the ones who copied the Scripture, who studied the Scripture, and who taught it to the people.

So Herod then, assembles this prestigious group and asks them if the Scripture teaches where the Messiah was to be born. Notice verse 5,

And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE RULERS OF JUDAH;
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

What I want you to see is that the religious and political leaders of the nation, these religious leaders, they knew the right answer. In fact, they quoted from two key Old Testament passages. The primary one is in Micah 5:2, where the prophet Micah tells us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, where Jesus was, in fact, born through divine providence. And then they ended their quotation with another significant passage from 2 Samuel 5:2. They knew the Scripture. They knew the right answer. They knew about the Messiah. But did you notice what the religious leaders didn't do? They didn't seek out the wise men. And they didn't send an official delegation just six miles south to Bethlehem to investigate.

One commentator, Bill Mounts, writes this, "The religious leaders of Jerusalem know from their own Scriptures where the Messiah is to be born, but not even the visit of foreign dignitaries piques their curiosity enough to travel six miles to Bethlehem to find out if there's any truth in the report." Six miles. They just kept studying the Scriptures, ironically, the very Scriptures that prophesied of this child. They just kept, morning and evening, offering their sacrifices. Again, ironically, the very sacrifices that pointed to the great sacrifice that the Messiah Himself

would make. They were busy with their religious duties and their religious practices, but they completely ignored their rightful king. They were too busy with their religion. This is the response of many to Jesus.

Even on this day, churches around our country are filled with people, and in many cases they are people like this. There may be some like this here this morning. There are people who replace true submission and obedience to their king with some version of religion and religious activity. On this very day, churches are filled with people who are happy to be religious, as long as it doesn't infringe on their own right to self rule, as long as it doesn't conflict with their own personal agenda. From Scripture they know much about their rightful king, but they refuse to submit their daily lives to His rule.

There's a real warning here in these religious leaders. Martin Luther put it this way, "The scribes should be a warning to all religious teachers, in the pulpit, the Sunday school, the family, because they told others where to find the Savior but did not go to Him themselves." You see, you can claim the Christian faith. You can faithfully attend church. You can show up on a Christmas morning service. You can know your Bible. You can know all the things about the Messiah, about your rightful king, and be just as lost as the religious leaders of Jesus' time were. The question is this, have you ever truly acknowledged Jesus' right to rule your life? And do you live in subjection to your king? Jesus asked it this way, "Why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which I say?" That makes no sense. No one responds to their king like that.

A third typical response to Jesus as king is shown in the response of Herod. We'll call it selfish defiance. Notice verse 3, "When Herod the king heard this," heard the story of the magi and their moving around the city asking questions about the Messiah, notice verse 3, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." It was in the year 40 B.C. that Rome placed Herod over Palestine. It took him three years to crush all the opposition to his rule, but in the year 37 B.C., he became supreme ruler over the land of Israel. This man would later come to be called Herod the Great.

He was called the Great not so much because of his military achievements, but because of his architectural ability. He was a builder. He built magnificent cities, like the beautiful port city of

Caesarea on the Mediterranean. Some of us have had the opportunity to visit there and see the incredible skills that he had, in organizing and making sure those things were built. He built incredible palaces like Masada. But his crowning achievement was the temple mount and the temple, rebuilding the temple on it. He took the hill that was the natural hill and slope there in the middle of Jerusalem, and he built a false platform over it. It came to be called the temple mount. You can still go on top of it today. Thirty five acres, where up to 400,000 people could gather on the feast days. And in the middle of that huge false platform, he built this magnificent temple, 50 yards high, by 50 yards wide at its face. A massive building. Herod the Great.

While he may have been great in his architectural skills, when it came to his personal life he was a demon in human form. Herod had 10 wives and more than a dozen children. By his own account the wife that he loved most was named Mariamne. But in spite of that fact, driven by his own paranoia, he secretly had her brother and her grandfather killed. Later he came to suspect her of infidelity and he had her killed, and then her two sons, and then her mother. Here, of course, in Matthew 2 he ordered the execution of all the male babies two years of age and younger in Bethlehem and its environs, probably 20 to 25 children under the age of two.

In 4 B.C., after this incident here in Matthew 2, and just five days before his death, he had his favorite son executed, because he was afraid he would usurp the throne sooner than Herod's death. Just to show you the kind of man he was, as he neared death, he ordered that hundreds of the leading Jewish people of the land, the aristocrats, the nobility, that hundreds of them be arrested and incarcerated, and then on the day of his death he ordered that they be executed. His reason? So that on the day of his death there would be true morning in the land of Israel. Fortunately, his orders on that front were disobeyed. Clearly, this man was insanely paranoid about losing his position.

And rightly so, because Herod was not Jewish, he was Idumean. His father was an Edomite. In fact, he was a descendant of Esau and not Jacob. He had connived and flattered and bribed and fought his way into his position in Israel. By the time the magi arrived, he was about 69 years old and he had reigned for 35 years. Twenty five years before this story, the Roman Senate had conferred this title on Herod: the king of the Jews. Now you understand Herod's reaction to the magi. Verse 3 says, "When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled." That means, the Greek

word means, to be stirred up, to be in a state of inner turmoil. Of course, because he faced the very real risk of losing his own personal empire that had spent his entire life building. Verse 3 goes on to say, “and all Jerusalem was troubled with him.” For 25 years the Jews in Jerusalem had learned to be troubled when Herod was because it would invariably mean trouble for them.

Now, Herod had never been one to wait for events to take their own course. And so he launched a plan. He knew where the Messiah was born. He had already learned that from the religious leaders, it was in Bethlehem, but he needed to know who the Messiah was, and the easiest way for him to find out would be to use the magi. Herod was a user. This was always his course of action and he’s going to use them. Verse 7, “Then Herod secretly called the magi and he ascertained from them the time the star appeared.” Herod sent a secret message to the wise men and then met with them in secret as well. Why? Because he’s covering his tracks. He’s already decided what he’s going to do. Verse 8, “And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and make careful search for the Child.’”

Now don’t miss the drama of this statement. When you read the Scripture, always read it with a bit of inspired, sort of, imagination. As you put yourself in this situation, think about what Herod now knows. Herod knew that this king was the one promised in the Old Testament and that he was divinely chosen, unlike Herod. He also knew that this was Israel’s Messiah, the one prophesied in the Hebrew Scripture. But Herod was so concerned about his own agenda that he just didn’t care. He was willing to do whatever it took to get what he wanted, even if it meant killing the Messiah. At the same time, he pretended an interest in spiritual things when it served his advantage. Notice verse 8, “when you’ve found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” Now, as disingenuous as it obviously was, Herod was a grade A hypocrite and manipulator. And so, he convinced these men that he was genuine, when, in fact, his real response to the rightful king, of him and everyone, was one of selfish defiance.

You know, the world is filled with people like Herod who live solely to advance their own agenda. They may pretend hypocritical worship to Christ. And like Herod, they may even, for a time, fool many good people. But inwardly, and often outwardly, they live in defiance of the commands and demands that Jesus Christ makes on their lives. Herod is a perfect example of

those who respond to Christ in defiant rebellion against His rule, but, perhaps, hidden beneath a facade of spiritual hypocrisy.

Let me just say to you, if, like Herod, your heart is defiant against Jesus Christ, your rightful king, He is not fooled by, nor is He interested in, your hypocritical, self serving worship. And He is still your rightful king. And either you will acknowledge Him in submission in this life, or you will acknowledge Him at the judgment in the life to come. But acknowledge Him, you will. Settled indifference, religious distraction, selfish defiance, these are all typical sinful responses to Jesus the king.

But thank God they're not the only responses. This story also illustrates the only right response to Jesus as king, and that is wholehearted devotion. We see this in verses 9 through 12. And this response comes from the most unlikely people. Remember, as we learned last week, the magi were pagan idolaters, involved in astrology, divination, Zoroastrianism. In Old Testament Israel they would have been stoned to death. But it was left to them to show the Jews, and the entire world, the right way, the only right response to Jesus the king.

In verses 9 through 11 we find their wholehearted devotion to Jesus of Nazareth. Let's look at their devotion together. First of all, it was characterized by seeking Him. Verse 9, "And having heard the king, they went their way; and lo the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over where the Child was." Herod had answered their question. Back in verse 2 their question was, "Where is He?" In verse 8, Herod sent them to Bethlehem. So they know where He is. And as they started to Bethlehem, the star that they had seen in the east, probably, as we learned last time, the *shekinah* glory cloud, it appeared to them again, and it went ahead of them the six miles from Jerusalem south to Bethlehem and apparently stopped over the actual house where Jesus was.

But what I want you to see is that these men, who were wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus as Messiah, sought Him with all their hearts. They traveled 800 miles from their homeland to come and find Him. They ask all around Jerusalem, where is He? Where is He? Where is He? Finally, they learn from Herod where He is and they march on to discover Him. Listen, if you are devoted to Jesus Christ, like them, you will invest your time, your energy, your life in

seeking Him. Now they had to travel 800 miles to find Jesus, all we have to do is open up the pages of this book. But if you're wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus, you will seek Him there.

Secondly, wholehearted devotion expresses itself by rejoicing in Him. Notice verse 10, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." They had seen this star, whatever it was, probably, again, the visible display of the glory of God, like the shepherds saw on the night of Jesus' birth, they had seen it in their home country, and then they had traveled to Israel without seeing the star again, until now. And notice their reaction, literally the Greek text says this, "they rejoiced with a mega joy extremely." They were overwhelmed with joy. And folks, their joy was not about seeing the star. Their joy was that the star was pointing them to the divine Messiah, whom Daniel had prophesied would make an end of sin. This is what genuine devotion to Jesus always looks like. Not only does it seek Him out with one's whole heart, but it finds its greatest joy in Him.

A third characteristic of devotion to Jesus, that we see in these men, is submitting to Him. Verse 11, "After coming into the house, they saw the Child." By the way, this is how we know that this was not on the night of Jesus' birth. There's no stable here. There's no manger here. We find them instead, living in a house. They had gone back to Nazareth and brought their belongings back to Bethlehem, had moved into Bethlehem, into a house there. "After coming into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground." You see, these men believed that this child was Israel's rightful king, and more than that, He was the divine Messiah. And so what do they do? They fell on their faces. The word is, to prostrate oneself on the ground.

Now remember, at this time Jesus is somewhere between 40 days old and two years old. And here are these powerful influential men, kingmakers from their own country, who had traveled there with likely a large contingent accompanying them. And when they find this child, they fall on their face before Him. This was a physical expression of their submission. In the ancient world, when you bowed before a king, you were acknowledging his position, his authority, his right to rule, his right to rule you. They were acknowledging that this child was Lord, that He was their Lord. And this is always how true faith responds to Jesus. It responds in submission to Him as king.

Wholehearted devotion to Jesus is also characterized by worshipping Him. Verse 11 goes on to say, “After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; they fell to the ground and they worshiped Him.” The two expressions together at the end of verse 11 make it clear that this was not merely the typical homage paid to a Middle Eastern monarch. In Scripture, prostrating yourself on the ground is typically reserved for one’s response to God. But the next expression makes it very clear. Look at the word worshipped. Every other time Matthew uses the word worship in his gospel, referring to Jesus, it is always true biblical worship. And there’s no reason to believe that this is any exception. In other words, these men had come to believe that Jesus was the divine Messiah, and they prostrated themselves on the ground and worshiped Him as God.

Verse 11 tells us, in their worship they also, notice, “opened their treasures.” The Greek word has the idea of opening a, sort of, treasure box or treasure chest. And from that, “they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Since the early church fathers, Christians have believed and taught that the magi intended to send a message in each of these three gifts. And I think that’s likely true because of how these items are used in the rest of Scripture. Take gold, for example, gold is rarely owned by individuals in biblical times, it was always associated with royalty. In fact, the Roman orator Seneca said that it was the custom in Persia, where this caste began, that no one approached the king without a gift. And he said that gold, the king of metals, was the only proper gift to a king.

Frankincense comes from the old French, *franc encens*, which means pure incense. This aromatic resin, from trees that grow primarily in Arabia and India, was used in incense and in perfumes. But frankincense occurs most frequently, in the Old Testament, in connection with the service of God. In fact, it was even part, frankincense was even part of the incense that was burned daily in the temple, representing the prayers of God’s people. So gold is associated with kings, incense with God.

Myrrh is a reddish brown resin, the dried sap of a tree that grows especially in Arabia. It was very valuable. In fact, in ancient days it was worth more than its weight in gold. Myrrh was used in three ways in the ancient world. It was used as perfume to make life more pleasant. It was used as a painkiller to make pain less severe. And it was used as an embalming fragrance

to make death and burial less repulsive. It's interesting that according to the gospel record, myrrh was used in all three of those ways in the life of Jesus. Here at His birth it's a fragrance, a perfume. Mark tells us in Mark 15 that it was part of a painkiller that was given to Him, or attempted to be given to Him, at His crucifixion. And John 19 says that it was a fragrance used in His embalming. William Hendrickson, the Presbyterian commentator, says, "They presented Him with gifts that were not only lavish, but also definitely appropriate. Gold, for He was and is indeed a king, King of kings and Lord of lords. Frankincense, for He is indeed God; the fullness of the godhead dwells in Him. And myrrh, for He is also man, destined for death, and this by His own choice."

But the most important thing about these gifts is that all three of them are very rare and are, therefore, incredibly valuable. It was common to bring such gifts to a king, when you entered his presence, to honor him. And so, these gifts then were lavish expressions of worship and adoration of Jesus Christ as king. These men model for us the only right response to the king, lavish unrestrained devotion. Devotion that seeks Him above all other things. Devotion that finds its greatest joy in life in Him. Devotion that willingly submits to His will, and that worships Him with the most valuable gifts that we have, our very lives.

Notice verse 12, "And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country," I love this, "by another way." Obviously, the main point of that statement is their actual physical journey. They had probably come up over the fertile crescent, from Babylon up over the fertile crescent, down the main trade route to Jerusalem. But they left by the route that would have taken them out of Herod's influence the quickest, probably directly east across the Jordan and then up the Jordan rift valley. But I think that phrase also has an irony to it. Because I think it reminds us of their spiritual journey. In the recent past, they had likely been pagan idolaters. But they left by another way, as worshippers of the true God, embracing His divine Messiah as the Old Testament had foretold.

So what's the point of the story? Why did God send the magi to Israel? Well, several reasons stand out. God used it, first of all, as the means of their salvation. Perhaps you've seen the bumper sticker, Wise men still seek Him. And of course, in a sense, that's true. But the only reason these wise men came seeking Christ is because God had first sought them. Six hundred

years before, God had given the ancestors of these men the Scripture, and Daniel, His prophet. And He had preserved that spiritual influence for hundreds of years so that these men would come to know His Son. Then when Jesus was finally born, He sent them a supernatural sign, the star, whatever it was, to mark the fact that He had been born. And God directed them where to find this child.

You see, the story of the wise men, like that of the shepherds, is a story of sovereign grace. Ultimately, it's not a story of their seeking Jesus, it's a story of God seeking them. Maybe on this Christmas day, God, through the good news about Jesus, is seeking you today. God sent these men to find their rightful king and He did it to accomplish their own salvation. Remember what the context of this story is? At the end of chapter 1 of Matthew, in Matthew 1:21, Gabriel tells Joseph, name the baby Jesus, Yahweh saves, ““for He will save His people from their sins.”” And in the very next paragraph, we meet some very unlikely candidates for that salvation. God sovereignly reached down into the paganism of the former Babylonian empire and He snatched these men, in grace, to Himself.

God also sent the magi, secondly, as a testimony that the Messiah had come. Have you ever thought about the fact that God could have had the star simply lead them directly to Bethlehem? They could have seen Jesus and His mother and they could have left and never interacted with the people of Israel. But as an expression of God's grace, God sent them to Jerusalem to prepare the people for the ministry of His Son. He was giving a testimony, and frankly, this story is a powerful testimony to everyone who reads it that Messiah has come. He's come, God's promise of the anointed one who would come and deal with sin. It's true. He came. He was born in Bethlehem, as the prophet Micah had said that He would be. And He was more than an earthly king, He was divine, and therefore truly deserving of worship, of your worship.

This story also serves, thirdly, as an invitation to believe the gospel. You see, Jesus is the rightful king. He's the rightful king of the Jews. He's the rightful king of the Gentiles, represented by these magi. He's the rightful king of every person on this planet. He is your rightful king. And this story is an invitation to you on this Christmas day. It's an invitation to join the magi at Jesus' feet. Not the baby in a manger, but the one who would grow up in perfection, who would live a perfect life, the life you should have lived, and then would die on

the cross, suffering the justice of God for the sins of everyone who would ever believe in Him, so that God could forgive those who would repent and believe in His Son. It's an invitation, to you.

So the question this morning is, who in this story do you most resemble? Which response to Jesus in this story is your response to Jesus? I want you to really ask yourself that this morning. You see, this passage is a mirror and it allows you to see your own soul from the vantage point of God Himself. Because everyone here this morning is in this passage. Your response is one of these responses to Jesus the king. Is it settled indifference? Is it religious distraction? Is it selfish defiance? Or is it wholehearted devotion? Today, as you celebrate with your family and friends, as you enjoy this Christmas day, remind yourself that this child whose birth you celebrate is your rightful king. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this amazing story. Thank You for what it shows us about our Lord, who He is, who He was, your Son, the divine Messiah, the king, our rightful king. And Father, thank You for what we learn about ourselves. Help us to hold the mirror of Scripture to our own souls and to honestly ask ourselves, who in this story stands in our place, whose response really resembles our own?

Father, I pray for those of us who are in Christ, that You would encourage us, that our wholehearted devotion to Christ would only grow stronger, that we would continue to seek Him out in the pages of Scripture. Lord, that we would be completely devoted to Him in worship, that we would submit our wills to Him, that we would find the greatest joy in life in Him. May that be true even today as we gather with our families and friends to remember His birth.

Father, I pray for those here this morning who find themselves in the other responses, in the sinful, the typical responses to Christ. Lord, may this be the day when You seek them out in sovereign grace, like You did the wise men. And may they seek You, even this day, because You are in this truth, in the truth about Jesus seeking them. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.