

As the wise men drew close to Jerusalem, they must have been convinced that their journey was coming to an end. It was completely reasonable to assume that they would find the newborn King near the seat of power. "Where else would a King be born, other than in a palace?"

Nobody could dispute their logic. Princes and kings ought to be born in royal mansions. So they show up at the palace and politely ask, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" It wasn't a complex question. It could have been answered by someone pointing down a hallway and saying, "Royal Nursery: third door on the left." But nobody pointed; nobody said, "that-a-way." What did happen is King Herod became troubled (and when King Herod was troubled, it was trouble for everyone). He called an emergency cabinet meeting composed of his closest advisers and the highest religious authorities. After consultation with his counselors, the king quoted a cryptic bit of Scripture and the wise men were sent on their way with a Bethlehem address. God provided great assistance, for the star which had been their guide throughout their journey appeared to lead them to the place, the house, where Jesus and His parents were living. It is there in Bethlehem that they found the King whom God has said, "will be the Shepherd of His people."

Matthew tells us what happened next: "And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their presents, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Can you see that picture in your mind? These men, rich men, educated, intelligent men, do not hesitate. They fall down and worship Jesus. They fell down, worshipped, and gave. They had found their King. Let's do everything we can to preserve how weird, stunning, and unusual this really was. After all, they didn't about His miracles or His teachings. They didn't know about His sermons, stories, and how He cared for the lowest citizen in His kingdom. They didn't know how this King would sacrifice Himself to save them from their sins. They didn't know that He would rise on the third day. Those things were years away. But these were wise men. When the Spirit said to them, "Worship your King;" they did.

Where is your King in 2021? Odd question, I know. We live in an age where most kings have been escorted from their thrones. Those royals who still remain have been stripped of much of their authority and serve as counselors to the people who hold the real power in their countries. Gone is the age when a ruler could fairly or unjustly do what he wanted, when he wanted, to whomever he wanted.

Still, that is the kind of absolute kingship that Matthew knew. Kings like Herod who could have his favorite wife murdered for suspected infidelity; his sons killed for conducting an imaginary revolt; the baby boys of a small town sacrificed lest one of them grow into being some kind of kingly competition. Matthew was acquainted with kings; kings whose wish could elevate or exterminate. So, who is your king in 2021?

You might be tempted to say, "I have no such king in my life." I assure you, you do, although you may never have thought about it in those terms. Each of us has someone or something that rules our days. I've known people whose king was a job at which they wanted to succeed, or a boss whom they wished to please. Family plans were set aside; personal needs were, without question, sacrificed to satisfy these kings. Or is it possible that your king has become the accumulation of stuff. If a friend has this thing, you need a similar thing. If an acquaintance drives this kind of car, you need to drive one better. Maybe your king is found in an endless search for approval, applause, or admiration. Your king might be an overwhelming fear of the future and all of tomorrow's potential and possible tragedies.

All of these I have listed will lead you around, let you down, and drive you into the ground. They cannot give you lasting hope or happiness, comfort you in a crisis, or deliver you from despair, discouragement, and sadness. There is only one King who can do these things; there is only one King who can rule you without crushing you. He's the one the wise men came to worship; the little one found not in a politicians' palace but in a humble house in Bethlehem. It is Jesus, the Son of God, whose yoke is easy and burden is light.

On this first Sunday of the new year, kneel at His feet in humility. Come before your King and repent, not only for the wrong that you have done, but for the allegiance you have given other rulers. To kneel before a King makes you extremely vulnerable. You are completely exposed. But come and kneel in repentance, believing that this King is not out for blood. He is not out for blood because He came to shed His own; He did not come to settle the score with you; He came to settle the score for you. And he did, on the cross of Calvary. Jesus is unlike any other King that's ever been. He gives far more than he takes.

So come, and place before Jesus your very best gifts of thanks. And while you're at it, place before Him all your worries and woes, your fears and frustrations, your losses and loneliness. Give to Him all that lies heavy on your heart; all that saddens your soul; all which robs you of rest. Turn these things over to Him and know that He who healed the sick, forgave the sinful, and reversed the results of death, will meet you precisely at the point of your need. Receive His blood-bought gifts and then present to your King the gifts that He really wants: your loyalty and your love.