

The Epiphany of Our Lord 1/6/19
Matthew 2:1-12 C

SERMON TEXT IS THE APPOINTED GOSPEL FOR THIS SUNDAY,
FROM THE 2ND CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, God the Father did what every proud father of newborn will do – He sent out a birth announcement. No, He didn't go about it like earthly fathers do -- handing out pink or blue bubble gum cigars. Nor did He run down to the Hallmark store and buy those cute little cards to send out. You know, "God the Father is pleased to announce the birth of His Son, the Lord Jesus, born December 25th in Bethlehem of Judea. The little Lord Jesus weighed so many pounds, so many inches long". He didn't do that.

Instead, He sent an angel to announce good news of great joy to shepherds out watching their flocks on the night the Savior was born. And, so that all mankind would know that the Savior was born for them, He sent a star. And what a star it must have been, because the wise men in the east saw it and recognized it for what it was – a birth announcement for the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the wise men went out and got a few baby gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh, loaded up the camels, and headed to Jerusalem.

When the wise men got to Jerusalem, they started poking around and asking questions, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him" (v. 2). The way Matthew tells the story, this is news to Herod the king. Even though the wise men saw the star and understood what it meant, King Herod seems not to even have noticed it.

When Herod heard the king of the Jews had been born, He was troubled. Put yourself in the king's crown for a minute. You're the king. And you know the saying, "t's good to be the king". He rules over Bethlehem, Judea, over all the Jewish people, so he is king of the Jews. But now, these guys from the east come and inquire where is He who has been born king of the Jews? He's got to be thinking – hey, wait just a minute, I'm king of the Jews. Who does this baby think He is muscling in on my territory and thinking that He is going to rule and reign over the people I rule over?

Herod was troubled and he is thinking this town is not big enough for both of us, so he decides this baby has got to go. So, he comes up with this hair-brained scheme, telling the wise men, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him" (v. 8). "Come and worship," the only thing is in Herod's mind, "worship" is spelled "K-I-L-L". You know the story. He wants to kill the baby Jesus, because He does not want a rival. Herod the king was troubled when Jesus was born.

And he's not alone. All Jerusalem was troubled with him. Which makes sense when you think about it. You see, even though the Romans are hated invaders who don't belong in the holy city of Jerusalem, the Jews who lived there had more-or-less gotten use to them. They learned to get along, in an uneasy truce. The Romans did some bad things, but not all bad. They had done some nice things, including building the Jews a fancy new a fancy new temple. The Jews liked that part. This point is: When it came to the status quo, its ok. But king of the Jews is going to bring change to their life. He's going to change the status quo, and if we Lutherans know anything, it is people are troubled by change. We don't

like it, and neither did Herod and all Jerusalem. So, Herod is troubled, all of Jerusalem is troubled with him.

And don't expect the chief priests and the scribes to get on board either. These are the teachers of Israel, the people who understand the Scriptures better than anyone. When Herod heard the king of the Jews had been born, he summons them and asks them where the Christ is to be born. They say, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel'" (vv. 5-6). There it is. Question asked, question answered.

But, when you read those words of Matthew, you get the idea that the chief priests and scribes are just really bored with the words of the prophet. They've read it hundreds, if not thousands of times. This promise from the prophet has been around for centuries. Matthew gives us the impression that, though the chief priests and scribes know the promise, their attitude is "Ho, hum. He's wasn't born last year, or last month, or yesterday, so he's probably just not coming".

Herod is troubled. All Jerusalem is troubled. The chief priests and the scribes are bored to tears with this promise. All because the star proclaims the king is here. What about you? How do you feel about that? Are you troubled by it? It is good to be the king and you like to be the king of your own life. You like to do things your own way. You don't want anyone, any time, telling you how to live your life. So you are troubled, because Jesus has come to be your king.

Or, perhaps you're troubled because you like your life the way it is. The status quo is working for you. You like what you do; you like your life the way it is. You like doing some things you should not be doing because

they are against God's will and God's way. And, now the Lord Jesus is born king. He's come and He's going to ask you to deny yourself and follow Him. And you don't like that. You're troubled by it.

Then again, maybe you're not troubled at all. Perhaps, you're just bored. I mean, Merry Christmas? Ba humbug. Christmas was December 25th. The presents are unwrapped, and the cookies are eaten. Merry Christmas? You've heard it over and over and over again, and you're just plain bored with it.

Here's what matters about this whole thing. Doesn't matter if you're King Herod, the chief priests or scribes. Doesn't matter if you live in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Glen Ullin, or Beulah, ND, you're troubled and you're bored. You're being troubled and you're being bored shows who you really are – a sinner. Who else but a sinner would be troubled by God coming in the flesh to rule and to reign over you and bring you into His kingdom? Who else but a sinner would be bored by the Word of God and the promise that the Savior has come to be your Redeemer and Shepherd?

It is precisely to troubled and bored sinners like you, that the star appears and comes to rest over where the Child is. This the House where the Child is and the star has come to rest for the Child is in His Word, that Word that says to you, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). And that is exactly what He did for you on the tree of Calvary.

As your king, He is crowned with thorns. He is placed upon the throne of the cross with nails. He took into Himself all your trouble, all your boredom, all your sin, all your death, all your hell and He rules and reigns over all of it by bleeding and dying all over that cross for you. And after three days rest in the tomb, He rises from the dead. He does that so that

you may be His own. So that you can live in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

So that that can happen, so that those gifts can be delivered to you, the star comes to rest over this place where the Child is. And here, He delivers those gifts to you by means of water and Word where He washes away all of your sin. By means of His Word preached and heard, by which He forgives you all your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He brings it all to you by means of His Body and Blood given to you under the bread and the wine, for your forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The star proclaims the king is here. And that's no reason to be troubled, that's no reason for boredom, that is more than ample reason to join with the wise men and worship the Lord Jesus with exceedingly great joy.