

Wise and Foolish Responses to the King

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Date: 19 December 2021

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 2 verses 1 through 12.

Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who is born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for 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.

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I may come and worship him.

[1 : 19] After listening to the king, they went on their way, and behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another way. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? Did you ever play the game King of the Hill when you were a kid?

Amen. Great game. Because it's an easy game to play, isn't it? All you need is just a few people and a hill. Or even just an elevated piece of ground will suffice for this game.

And you know, the object of the game was to be the King of the Hill, which meant that you would push down whoever was on top of the hill in order to be the only one on the hill.

[2 : 34] And then when you were on the hill, your job was to push everyone away so that they would not push you off of the hill and take your place as king. Growing up, our King of the Hill games always started out enjoyable.

We laughed and we smiled as we jostled with one another, vying to be the lone occupant on that small mound of earth. But sometimes, almost all the time, eventually the games took a violent turn. Alliances were formed. Sneak attacks commenced. Names were called. Feelings were hurt. Clothes were ripped. Blood was shed from knees and from elbows and sometimes from a nose. Much was sacrificed in our efforts to be King of the Hill. But to us, it all seemed worth it because it's fun to be the King.

Or at least, that's what we tend to think. But generally speaking, as Americans, we don't like kings. We had a king once, long ago, and that didn't go so well for us.

[3 : 57] And still today, though times have changed a lot, we are wary of any one person being in absolute power over us.

We're aware of the individual freedoms and liberties that can be lost when one person reigns with total authority. And so our history books, we know too, are filled with examples, not just in our country, but outside of it for sure, of men and women who use their unbridled power to lead to their people suffering and even the death of the people who they were supposed to reign over.

Men and women for ages who have sat on thrones have committed all kinds of atrocities to preserve their place atop them.

For those reasons, most of us would agree with the famous statement that Lord Acton, an English Barron once made in a letter that he wrote to Bishop Mendenhall Creighton in 1887, and this is what he said, Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And he concluded by saying, Great men are always bad men. You may not agree with that last statement, but I think we all agree that we have seen over and over again that power tends to corrupt someone who has it absolutely, absolutely.

[5 : 24] They do horrible things when they're given that much power. And so our text today presents us with two kings. One is a foolish king.

He was a king who used violence to preserve his kingdom in order to keep it for himself, and his name was Herod. The other is the king of kings, a king who suffered violence on behalf of others so that he would share in his kingdom with them and that they would rule and reign with him eternally, and that king's name is Jesus.

Our text also presents us with a group of travelers who Matthew identifies as wise men. These wise men have interactions with both of these kings, and it's through their interactions with these kings that we learn the following, which is the main idea for our sermon this morning.

So, fools reject the king of kings, but those who are wise rejoice in him.

If you recall, as we've gone through Matthew's gospel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he was writing originally to a Jewish audience.

[6 : 58] And so he was seeking to show them, to reveal to them that Jesus is their Messiah, that he is the king who has been promised. And he's begun already to make those links in their minds by going through Jesus' lineage and connecting that back to the royal line of David.

Last week, we looked at how in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity added a human nature to his divine nature, becoming the God-man, fully and truly God, and fully and truly man simultaneously.

That Jesus is God's Son. That he is literally also God with us, and he is our Savior. The one who came, the one who willingly laid down his life to atone for our sins, bringing us peace with God and eternal life through faith in him and him alone.

This is good news. This is news that we should rejoice in. News that Mary, the mother of Jesus, rejoiced in when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and informed her that she would give birth to Jesus, the Son of God.

The angel said to her in Luke chapter 1, verse 32 through 33, And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and shall call his name Jesus.

[8 : 25] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

And of his kingdom there will be no end. So we see in their words that refer to a king and a kingdom and how he will reign. And so Christmas reminds us that Christ has come, that Christ is king, and that Christ reigns.

And it reminds us, too, that he is an awesome king. He is a king unlike any other. A king who is perfect. A king who is righteous.

A king who is gracious. A king who is merciful and loving and forgiving. And a king who conquers our greatest foes without so much as one drop of sweat coming down from his brow.

He is mighty. He is powerful. He is good. He is a king who lives sinlessly. He is a king who died sacrificially. He is a king who reigns eternally.

[9 : 28] He is a king unlike any other king. A king who shares his kingdom with those who trust in him. He is an awesome king. While the story of his incarnation and birth contained within his word reminds us of the great joy that we have in his coming, it also reminds us of the depths of mankind's depravity.

Not everyone, in fact, most people rejected Jesus. They refused to acknowledge their sin and their need for a savior and refusing to worship him and to give him the praise that he was due.

They instead, in an effort to preserve their own places, their own positions, and to rule their own lives, behaved foolishly by rejecting him.

Why? Why? Why? Why? Well, because I believe, as we see in Scripture, that like Herod, to them, Christ is a threat.

And so the first thing we learn from our text this morning is that fools reject Christ because they feel threatened by him. I want to read verses 1 through 3 again.

[10:52] Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, So we must understand that when you walk into the king's palace and you ask the king, where is the king, such a question is going to send off alarm bells in the mind of whoever it is that is sitting upon the throne as king.

Israel's history, like that of other ancient kingdoms, was rife with examples of men who plotted against the king to seize the king's power and the king's throne for themselves. And so when this question was brought to Herod with the notion that there was another king of the Jews whom these wise men were seeking and who had come to worship, he was troubled. Herod was that kind of person who, when he was troubled, made everyone else feel troubled as well.

All of Jerusalem, Matthew says, was troubled with Herod because they knew that if Herod ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

[12:24] Have you ever known someone like that? Maybe you've had a boss that you've worked for before and you and your co-workers kind of whispered around one another behind their back.

He or she is in a real bad mood. Watch it. And so you would walk around on eggshells and you do all that you can to avoid them for the day, trying not to draw their ire.

Now listen, Herod was like that only a thousand times worse because Herod would kill you if you got in his way. Herod was a violent ruler, even compared to the standards of that age.

He killed members of his own family. He killed his own sons to preserve his place upon the throne and the title that he coveted, king of the Jews.

But truthfully, Herod was not a Jew. He had no legitimate claim to that title. Herod was an Edomite. He was given that title by the Roman Senate for his supporting them in the Judean conflict and was tasked by them to govern that region in order to keep the peace for the Romans by putting down whatever kind of Jewish revolt there might be.

[13:41] And so he knew in his heart of hearts that he was not truly the king of the Jews. And he wasn't really a king. He was a puppet.

He was used by the Romans to achieve their objectives. But he sought to eliminate any threat to his throne, and he did so with swift and fierce action.

Even when he heard that the true king of the Jews, the true king of kings had been born, we see that instead of rejoicing that God's promise had been fulfilled, that the Messiah had come, and instead of receiving that news with gladness, Herod felt threatened.

And he jumped into action. In verse 4, it says that he assembled all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

So this is Herod's plan. He gathers together all of the best biblical scholars that he could get his hands on, and he asks them to find out where the Messiah was to be born.

[15:00] You see, Herod, at least it seems, knew some of Scripture. But amazingly still, he would not accept the fact that the king of kings, the promised Messiah, had come.

He wouldn't accept that as good news. He felt threatened by it. What he should have done was that he should have abandoned his throne at that moment to the one who was truly worthy to sit upon it. But instead, he tried to set a trap for this king who he saw as his rival. Herod thought that if he could discern from Scripture where the Messiah was to be born, that he could use that information to preserve his place as king.

And so in verses 5 and 6, it says, So this is Herod's plan.

This is Herod's plan. How foolish.

[16:17] I'll use God's word, and I will hinder God's will from taking place. I mean, how full of yourself must you be to think that you could do such a thing?

But Herod thought he was pretty smart. He knew the location where the threat was, that it was in Bethlehem, a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem, easy for him to maneuver to get his men towards if he need to in order to set a trap.

And that's what he did. He tried to manipulate the wise men first by trying to get them to pinpoint directly where this newborn king was living.

And so in verses 7 through 8, Again, Herod didn't care about the significance or the meaning of the star.

He wanted to know the time that it appeared so that he could discern the age of this child. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child.

[17:22] And when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him. So Herod's plan at this point had been hatched. In his foolish mind, he believed that the threat to his throne would soon be neutralized.

But he failed to understand that man is not a match for God. But our will will not overcome the will of God who is almighty.

In verse 12, it says that the wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod after they found Jesus. And so they departed by another way to their country. If you'll jump in chapter 2 to verses 16 and 18, you see how Herod responded to the failure of his plan.

In a fit of rage, he ordered the execution of every male child in Bethlehem, aged two years old or younger.

This is how foolish and how evil this king was. He ordered that babies and infants, toddlers, would be slaughtered in their homes and in the streets of their community in order to keep his place.

[18:36] Only a fool would feel threatened by Christ. And only a fool would think that he can defeat God and thwart his will.

So what lessons can we learn from Herod in his foolish notion that he could outsmart God and exert his will, his power over God's, and think that he could keep his place as king?

Well, I think firstly, we see that those who foolishly reject God and his word do stupid things. Those who reject God and his word do stupid things.

And those stupid things that they do harm themselves and others in tragic ways. Romans 1, 21 through 25 talks about how when we sin, we do stupid things.

When we reject God, we do stupid things. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

[19:48] Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever.

Amen. We live in a time when people think to believe in God is foolish.

They think it's wise to instead believe that we've descended from monkeys. That existence is just by chance.

That our ways are better ways than God's ways. That sin isn't really sin. Sin is just human nature. And so therefore, and it is human nature, but they excuse it as if, well, you know, let us just do whatever we want to do. And so what they do is they remove restraints against sin.

[21:00] And they end up saying things like, we don't need laws and we don't need police officers or anyone to enforce them. Let people do what they want. Let people believe what they want to believe.

Let people live life their own way. Let people determine their own truth for themselves. And they say that when we do, there will be peace. Now, how is that going for us?

Not well. Secondly, Herod's reaction to Christ being threatened by him and seeking his death reveals the true nature of every sinful heart.

The Bible says that we are all born sinful. We all are born with a sinful nature. And it's a nature that we've inherited from our first parents who were deceived into thinking that they knew better than God did.

That they could become God themselves. That they could be their own authority. That they knew better than him. Romans 3.23 reveals the condition of each of our hearts.

[22:05] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And then in chapter 8, verses 7 through 8. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. For it does not submit to God's law.

Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. So you see, each of us is born with a desire for the world to orbit around ourselves.

We don't want to bow to God. We want him to bow to us. And so inside every heart sits a little King Herod.

Who wants to rule. And who is threatened by anyone or anything that challenges our desire. Our ability to be our own authority.

To be our own ruler. Our own determiner of what is right and what is wrong. And what is true and what is false. What we need is for that foolish King in our hearts to be overthrown by the true King. [23 : 21] Who rules righteously. Who reveals truth. And who saves us from our sin and our sinful ways. So when we come to this text.

And we read about Herod. And the kind of King that he was. And we look at the rest of Scripture and says. What it reveals about our own sinful desire to rule our own lives. And to reject Christ. I ask you, who is your King? Who is truly your King? There is only one King fit to rule. And that King's name is Jesus. And one day. One day. And I hope a day coming soon. The Bible says that every knee.

Every single knee. Will bow to him. And on that day. You will either bow. In reverence. In worship. [24 : 25] In honor. Of the coming of the true King. Or you will bow. In a begrudging. Confession. And acknowledgement. That you were wrong.

Christmas reminds us. That our King has come. And that our King came. As a servant. Our King came to die.

For his people. That by faith in him. They will live. And reign with him. Forever. Forever. This is a King.

Who is truly worthy. Of our praise. Philippians 2. 4. Or 11. The Apostle Paul talks about. That coming day. In. In the mind.

Of this wonderful King. Who has saved us. Let each of you not. Look only to his own interests. In other words. The world doesn't revolve around you.

[25 : 23] But also to the interests. Of others. Have this mind among yourselves. Which is yours in Christ Jesus. Who though he was in the form of God. Did not count equality with God.

A thing to be grasped. But emptied himself. By taking the form of a servant. Being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form.

He humbled himself. By becoming obedient to the point of death. Even death on a cross. Yes. Therefore. God has highly exalted him.

And bestowed on him. The name that is above every name. So that at the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow. In heaven. And on earth.

And under the earth. That is everybody. And every tongue. Will confess. That Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.

[26 : 19] You see our churches. Our society. Our world. Is in desperate need. Of wise people.

Wise people. Who have not rejected. Their only hope. For salvation. And who do not feel threatened. By the coming. Of their great king.

But instead. They rejoice in it. And so next we see. Wise men. Rejoice in Christ's coming. Because they know. That he is the true king. Wise men rejoice in Christ's coming.

Because they know. He is the true king. In verse 9. It says. That the wise men. After listening to the king. Went on their way. And behold the star.

They had seen. When it rose. Went before them. Until it came to rest. Of the place where the child. Was. So here we notice. Right off the bat.

[27 : 17] That wise men. Are those who seek truth. And in seeking truth. They are led to Jesus. Who is the source. Of truth. But who were these wise men?

We assume that there were. There were three of them. Because of the three gifts. That were given. But the Bible does not specify. Their number.

There could have been more. It's also a common misconception. That the wise men. Visited Jesus at the stable. Soon after his birth. But it may have been days later.

It may have been weeks later. It may have been months later. It may have been years later. That they visited him. Because in verse 11. We see that at that point. Jesus was in a house.

When they came to visit. And it makes sense. When Herod. Discerned. When the star had appeared. And why he chose to have. At least children. Two years old. And younger. Killed.

[28 : 14] Because he wanted to make sure. That any child. That looked the age. Of what Jesus would have been. By that time. Would not be a threat. To him anymore. We know that they came.

From the east. Most likely. That means they came. From Persia. Which is a modern day. Iran. And so. In coming that distance. That meant that they would have.

Traveled about 800 to 900 miles. Just to see Jesus. It's also likely. That they knew. Of the writings. Of the prophet Daniel.

Who in time past. Had been the chief. Of the court. Of the seers. In Persia. And in Daniel chapter 9. Verses 24 through 27. He wrote. A prophecy.

Again. Inspired by God. That gave a timeline. For the birth. Of the Messiah. And so. They were likely. In possession. Of that scripture. The wise men. Were guided. Also.

[29 : 09] By a miraculous. Stellar event. Called the star. Of Bethlehem. And this could have been. A conjunction. Of planets. Perfectly aligned. To create this bright.

Light. In the sky. Or it. Likely could have been. That it was just. A supernatural. Light. A God-given. Light. Just as God. Would direct. His people.

Through their wilderness. Wandering. In a light. And just as his. His presence. His Shekinah. Glory. Would fill the temple. So. That is what this light. Might have been. Also. Whatever the case may be. It guided them. To the place. Where Jesus was. These wise men. Were also astrologers. They were scholars. They were. They were smart men. And again.

They were guarded by. But most importantly. They were guided by. God's word. To God's son. It's interesting. To speculate over. The wise men. Who they were. But what is most.

[30 : 05] Important. Is what they did. What they did. Which reveals. What made them. Truly wise. As we see in verse 2.

Those who are wise. Read. And believe. And trust in God's word. Because they believe. In the God. Who has authored it. And the God.

Who reveals himself. Through it. As Proverbs 1. 7. Says. Of those who are truly wise. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom.

And instruction. And so. What we understand. From the wise men. What we know. From God's word. Is that those who receive. God's word. Are those who truly. Revere. Him. They trust.

That God's word. Is the final authority. On all matters. They know. That their thoughts. And their opinions. And their feelings.

[31 : 02] Do not supplant. God's word. Wise people. Revere. And receive. God's word.

No. Many of you. Will make New Year's resolutions. And. I don't do that. Because. Because I. You know. They end somewhere in February.

Most of the time. But one thing I do recommend. Is that. For you. For us. For me. As a church. That in this coming year.

You. Resolve. To immerse yourself. In God's word. Unlike you ever. Have. Before. Now. Many of you.

Have sought out. A reading plan. To read. The bible. In one year. And. And you did well. Until you got. To Leviticus. Listen. It's all God's word.

[31 : 59] And it's all good. And God. Will use. His word. In a way. To draw you near. To him. In a way. That you will know. Him more. That will be a blessing. For you.

It will be a blessing. For your family. It will be a blessing. To your friends. It will be a blessing. To this church. And to this world. Because you know what? The world. Needs. Wise people.

The world. Needs people. Who know. The truth. And the world. Needs people. Who aren't afraid. To stand for what is true. And declare. What is true.

We need. Wise people. And wise people. Know God. And they know. His word. From verse nine. We also witness. That wise men. Seek Jesus.

Jesus. And the sermon on the mount. That Jesus would preach. Decades later. After this event. He cautioned. His listeners. Against wasting their lives.

[32 : 53] In worry. And anxiety. Seeking after things. In order to feel safe. And secure. In this world. Instead. He gave them this encouragement. In Matthew 6.

33. But seek first. The kingdom of God. And his righteousness. And all these things. Will be added. To you. Jesus' command.

Is that. We seek. His kingdom. That we seek. His righteousness. Things that are found. Only in salvation. Through him.

And when we know. Christ. Who was our true. King. When we know. That we've been truly. Saved by him. Not as a result. Of anything. That we have done. What happens.

Is that you see. Jesus. As the. The object. That you truly. Treasure. The most. The treasure. That is.

[33 : 51] Worth. Seeking. And pursuing. Above any. And all. Others. Because you know. That it is only. Through our true. King of kings. Your true. King of kings. Who suffered. And who died.

For your sins. That you have received. A righteous standing. Before your creator. And interest. Into his eternal. Kingdom. Wise men. Believe God.

Wise men. Trust in his word. Wise men. Seek Jesus. Who is the word. Of God. Who became. Flesh. And. Wise men.

Humble. Themselves. Before their king. In authentic. Genuine. Worship. Verses 10. Through 11. When they saw the star. They rejoiced exceedingly. With great joy. And going into the house. They saw the child. With Mary. His mother. And they fell down. And they worshipped him.

[34 : 48] Then opening their treasures. They offered him. Gifts. Of gold. And frankincense. And myrrh. The wise men. Reserved their worship.

And they reserved. For their treasures. Not for Herod. Who in the eyes. Of the world. Was a powerful man. A powerful ruler. But they reserved.

These things. For a child. Who didn't live. In a palace. And whose home. Was no doubt. Meager. To the world.

That. Would have seemed. Like a foolish thing. For these wise men. To do. Such gifts. They would think. Such.

Adoration. If they had given. Those things. To Herod instead. They could have gotten. On his good side. And Herod was. A powerful man.

[35 : 45] And Herod knew people. And if they just. Would have given. Those things to Herod. Man. They would have been. Able to network. All throughout that region. And really. Advance themselves. In the eyes.

Of. The world. But they didn't. Give those things. To him. Because he wasn't. Worthy of them. There is only one.

Who is worthy. There was only one. Who is truly the king. Herod was just a man. But Jesus was God. Who became.

Man. Fully God. Fully man. Emmanuel. God. With. Us. Those who know. The true worth. Of Jesus. Worship him. Those who know. The true worth. Of Jesus. Humble themselves. Before him. And like the wise men. They give their.

[36 : 41] King of kings. Their best. Because they know. That he is worthy. These men. Traveled. Hundreds of miles. Just to be. In Jesus's presence.

Just so that they could. Worship him. And give him. Their treasures. And so I ask you. And I was convicted. By this question.

Myself. This week. In preparing this sermon. Do you go to the same lengths. To spend the same amount. Of time with God. They traveled. Hundreds of miles. All we have to do. Is just drop. To our knees. It's not a very long distance. They wanted to be.

In the king's presence. We. By the indwelling. Of his spirit. Are able to be. In the king's presence. When we. Open his word. And study it. When we go to him. In prayer. Do you.

[37 : 35] Do you go to the same lengths. To be in the presence. Of the king. Do you again. Seek his presence. In prayer. And study of his word.

And desire to join. His church. As you do so. In that. Do you hold your treasures. As loosely. In your hands. As they did. Offering. Them to God. For the advancement. Of his kingdom. And for the glory. Of his great name.

Do you seek him. Above all others. Are you willing. To humble yourself. Before him. Acknowledging him. As the true king. No matter how foolish.

That might look. Or that might sound. Or that might seem. To the world. Like Shadrach. Meshach. And Abednego. Will you. Refuse. Likewise. To bow.

[38 : 30] Your knee. Or. Or your life. To any. False king. Any kind of. False idol. Which compete. With your attention. And your affections.

With the one. Who is truly. Worthy. Of them. You know. In my life. The Lord has blessed me. To have many. Mentors. One.

One. In particular. Has. That I've known. For a handful. Of years. Has been. A blessing. To me. And. Was someone. I talked to. He's. Again.

A handful. Of years. Older than me. And as I lamented. A few weeks ago. Whenever. I told you. That I'd turned 39. And you know. And. And I'm about. To go over. The hill. With 40.

Right. Wah. Wah. Everybody felt. Real sad. For me. This morning. I know. But I remember. Talking to him. About that. Just. You know. Talking to him. About turning 40. For whatever reason.

[39 : 24] And he said. You know what. When I knew. That I was going to turn 40. Or after my 39th birthday. Right. You know. You're going to turn 40. After you turn 39. He said. I wanted to be in the best physical shape of my life.

And I did. I got in the best physical shape of my life. And. And to me. I said. You know. That's a great goal. I'm. I'm going to aspire to do the same thing.

And so. I've begun that journey. But. As I was going through. This passage. I was convicted. By something. Because you know what I realized is.

That what is better for me. And what's better for my family. And what's better for you. My church family. And what's better for my community.

Is not the physical shape that I am in. As much as the spiritual shape. That I am in. And so. I have two goals. I still want to be.

[40 : 29] Physically in good shape. So that my son. Doesn't get any ideas. And thinks that he can take me anytime soon. But more importantly than that. I want to.

I want to be. Pursuing the Lord. Even more than I ever have before. I want to be in his word. I want to be. Prayer. I want him to use my life.

And I want you all to join with me. In that goal. I want to be in the best. Spiritual shape that I am. Ever been. At the time I turned 40. And then you know what. When I turn 41. I want to be in the best.

Spiritual shape that I've ever been. At 41. And so on. And so forward. Until our king returns. Or I go to be with him. Wise men. Wise people. Treasure Christ.

And he is the one. Whom they seek with their best. Humbly acknowledging. That without him. They are without hope. That without him. They are without peace.

[41 : 25] Without him. They are lost in sin. But knowing that in him. They have life. In him. They have peace. In him. They have hope.

And that hope. Will never disappoint. When their king. The king of kings. Returns. And so the final observation here. About what it means to be wise.

What it means to rejoice. In the true king of kings. Is this. That wise men. Obey God. Rather than men.

In verse 12. And being warned in a dream. Not to return to Herod. They departed for their own country. By another way. Scripture doesn't record anything else.

About these men. But they were blessed. No doubt. And grateful. I'm sure. As they returned. To their homeland. And to share.

[42 : 22] With their countrymen. The good news. That they had found. And they knew. And they had worshipped. The king. Surely they knew Herod.

Would be outraged. By their disobeying. His order. To return to him. And to tell him. Where Jesus was. But they responded. To a higher power. And so.

Do you. And I. The one who is truly sovereign. They had been. In the presence. Of the true king. The Messiah. The son of God.

And we know. The rest of the story. The Bible tells us. About the king of kings. Who Jesus. Was. And what he would do. And I love.

Second Corinthians. Eight. Nine. For you know. The grace of our Lord. The grace of our king of kings. Jesus Christ. That though he was rich.

[43 : 18] Yet for your sake. For your sake. He became poor. So that you. By his poverty. Might become rich. The Christmas message.

Is that the true king has come. And that there is hope. For humanity. Ruined by sin. That in Christ. There is hope of pardon. Hope of peace. With God. Hope of glory. Because. At the father's will. Jesus Christ. Our true king. Became poor.

And was born in a stable. So that 30 years later. He would hang on a cross. To die in our place. And bear God's righteous wrath.

For our sins. So you understand. There is no king. Like Jesus. And there never will be.

[44 : 16] Is this king worthy of your praise? Is this king worthy of your treasures? Is this king worth pursuing above all others?

Wes, I thought you would yell yes. Absolutely. Yes, he is. The herod of our hearts must be overthrown.

The one. The one in whom Christ reigns. Is the one who knows the true king. And they are the one who share in his kingdom. And that is now.

And that goes on forever. I like what J.I. Packer wrote. I've been reading his book Knowing God.

Which has been influential in my life right now. And he wrote about the Christmas spirit.

He said. We talk glibly of the Christmas spirit. Rarely meaning more by this than sentimental joy on a family basis. But the phrase should in fact carry a tremendous weight of meaning.

[45 : 22] It ought to mean the reproducing in human lives of the temper of him who for our sakes became poor at the first Christmas. And the Christmas spirit itself ought to be the mark of every Christian all year round.

Wise men rejoice in the coming of their king. And they celebrate it not just at Christmas but always. So again, let's resolve to have the true Christmas spirit always in our lives as we advance the gospel of our great king together.

One question of application for you this morning. Are you living wisely or foolishly? Is the way that you're living more like Herod?

You want to be your own ruler? You want to be your own authority? You want to follow your own will? Or is it more like the wise men who sought Jesus, humbled themselves before him, gave him their best, and refused to bow their knee to anyone else other than him?

You know, Jesus is the true king of the hill. He is the true king of the hill. He is a king who served his people by dying on a hill. He is a king who has conquered all our foes.

[46 : 49] He is a king who gave his life that we may live. He doesn't push people down and tear their clothes and shed their blood to preserve his place.

He lifts them up. And he sheds his blood to cover their sins. And he doesn't rip their clothes but clothes them in his righteousness. Whatever king, whatever stoops so low to bring others so high. Jesus is a great king. And wise men rejoice in him. Let's pray. Lord God, you are so good. You are so gracious to us.

We delight and we rejoice in knowing, Lord, that we have a true king, the king of kings. Lord, a king like any other we have known in this world.

A king who suffered in the place of others. A king who came and who served in order to give his life to save his people. That they would know him and be saved eternally through him.

[47 : 59] And dwell in his kingdom with him forever. God, there is no greater news. There is no greater hope than the hope that we have in Jesus. And so, Father, as we celebrate the birth of your son this time of year.

Lord, open our eyes to see what it means to be truly wise. And God, use us now and always to advance your kingdom until our king returns to take us home.

Lord, we are so thankful for you and for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, the true king who lives forever. It's in his name that we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen.