

The Star Proclaims the King Is Here

☆ **Worship and worry (vv.1-12)**

☆ **Miracle and tragedy (vv.13-18)**

☆ **Death and life (vv.19-23)**

In the Name of Jesus, our shining Epiphany King and Savior, dearly redeemed family of God:

Remember the old saying? “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.” This is one of the greatest griefs of my ministry. God’s Word can comfort hearts and bring families back together, but hurting people wander away from the water of life. This second chapter of Matthew is full of guidance and refreshment for all who will stoop down and drink and live. But we sinners are far too much like Herod here who was surrounded by the truth of God’s salvation – for him and for the entire world. Yet we like Herod choose our own ways and words and will. Unless the Lord grants repentance unto life, we can only destroy ourselves. Which would be bad enough, but evil always hurts those around as well. While many are appalled at Herod’s slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem, they ignore the American abortion chambers and demand the death of babies at the choice of their mothers. And we who grieve too often miss how desperately we need King Jesus who shined forth in His infancy when the mystery was revealed of God with us. **The Star Proclaims the King Is Here.**

☆ **Worship and worry (vv.1-12)**

This King taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven...” He was begotten of the Father from all eternity and promised through God’s prophets as the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Centuries earlier a captive named Daniel had carried a prophecy about a star back to Babylon. An evil prophet named Balaam was hired to curse God’s people Israel before they crossed into the Promised Land. But Balaam could not curse and kept blessing instead. *“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.”* (Numbers 24:17 NIV84) Grace would come with power.

“Hallowed be Thy name.” God’s name-reputation always comes true. The Wise Men from the east could follow that star all the way across the desert to the Promised Land. But it apparently disappeared for a while which made it necessary to stop in Jerusalem. The Jewish chief priests and experts in the law checked God’s name-reputation written in the Old Testament Scriptures. Micah the prophet was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to identify Bethlehem. For some reason these leaders did not go. They had the Name of God in the Holy Scriptures, but they did not have His Name holy among them.

“Thy kingdom come.” Herod could never pray that. He wanted to be king over Jesus. And why not? He killed his favorite wife and their two sons out of paranoia to keep his throne. No baby king would topple him. Herod trusted his own wiles and promised **Worship**, but was filled with **worry**.

We shake out heads and miss how much we **worry** too. It’s all because our sinful nature wants to be in charge. My first thought is rarely to pray, but instead, “What will I do? How can I fix this?” Then we wonder why **Worship** gets crowded out by **worry**. Every heart wants to be its own king.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Herod’s will was to trick the Wise Men into telling him the house where he could send his soldiers’ swords. Instead the Wise Men gave gifts that poor Mary and Joseph would need to escape Herod’s evil will. Meanwhile, the Wise Men followed the will of God and changed their plans. Are we always willing to change our plans to match the will of God?

☆ **Miracle and tragedy (vv.13-18)**

“Give us this day our daily bread” – not only food which Mary and Joseph could buy with Wise Men’s treasures, but also protection. God’s **Miracle** of information for Joseph in a dream needed no news reports or cell phones. God’s angel said, “*Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, because Herod will search for the child in order to kill him.*”¹

By the **Miracle** of faith Joseph let God rule his heart. He put Jesus his holy stepson on the throne of his heart to rule as Christ his King. God worked the **Miracle** of courage and persistence which delivered Jesus from the **tragedy** of grief in Bethlehem. Herod could not locate the exact house because the Wise Men outwitted him. In his evil fury he wiped out “*all the boys in Bethlehem and in all the surrounding countryside.*” By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Jeremiah (31:15) the prophet had foretold this **tragedy**: “*A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.*”

Yet Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” How would the mothers in Bethlehem do that? How can you forgive when the sin against you was so deeply personal that you struggle not to dream about it? Where do we flee from the post traumatic stress of **tragedy**? Dear children of God, flee to Egypt with Jesus. Follow Him through....

☆ **Death and life (vv.19-23)**

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” God tempts no one. (James 1:13) God is good; He is not the author of evil. **Death** came into this world when Adam chose to listen to his wife and Satan instead of God. Adam and Eve wanted to master their own **life**. They proved how much we all need God to lead us away from temptation and strengthen us when Satan tries to mislead us. While the world is whispering in our ear, our sinful nature cannot see the deadly consequences of sin. It always looks so harmless, then proves to be a lie. Sin brings the **Death** of relationships between us and our loved ones, and worst of all between us and God. Unless God stepped in, we would have no **life**.

Joseph did not decide or determine on his own to believe and obey. First, the Holy Spirit gave **life** to Joseph’s heart by the Good News that his Virgin Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit. She gave birth as promised to God’s own Son. Joseph responded in faith by naming his baby “Jesus.” Joseph was reflecting the power of the Gospel to fulfill all the prophecies of God to rescue us from **Death** and give us **life** instead. Another dream told Joseph to head back home to the Promised Land. But Joseph also used his God-given wisdom not to go back to Judea where a murderous son of Herod ruled. He went instead to Nazareth. With a play on words God fulfilled His promise that the Savior would be a “*Nazarene,*” a “*Netzer*”-Branch, growing from the roots of the tree or family line of David: “*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*” (Isaiah 11:1 NIV84)

“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.” We pray that, but do we believe it? You’ve followed Jesus to Egypt and back, yet those sad memories keep growing more bitterness in your heart. Strife in the family, trouble in your marriage, disappointment in school, at work, with friends – how do you deal with all this grief? Give God the glory. Follow Jesus through His life all the way to the cross. There at the foot of the cross you can lay down all your griefs and fears, your troubles and your triumphs. For to God alone belongs the praise for all the good and the glory for rescuing us from all evil. Lay those painful memories at the foot of the cross and walk away free. Don’t double the tragedy, disown it. It belongs to God. He will make it right and help your feelings catch up with your faith. All is accomplished in Christ. In His Epiphany we too can shine. Amen.

¹ W.P. ~ Wartburg Project – Matthew popular review (w/o footnotes) the Bible text unless stated otherwise. [M.C. 1/11/2015]

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