

January 2, 2022

John 1:10-18

Mathew 2:1-12

Usually at this time of year there are many meaningful moments in Our Lord's early life that we like to remember. Besides Christmas, there is His circumcision on January first, His Epiphany to the Magi on January sixth and His baptism on January ninth. This morning I thought it might be best to focus on Epiphany. This year it falls on a Wednesday. So I thought we could pull it back to this morning.

I found it interesting that the visit by the Magi was only recorded by Mathew. He writes for a very Jewish audience and this story would appeal to them on a very prophetic level. Recently scholarship has thought that the three Magi were Zoroastrian priests from Persia. I did a little bit of digging and found some references in their texts about a coming Messiah. Oddly enough He would be born of a virgin and at the age of thirty He would start doing God's work. It is even appealing to some Christians. So Zoroastrian prophesy lines up with Hebrew prophesy. Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign, Look, the young virgin is with child and shall bear a son and shall name Him Immanuel." Some translations use woman or girl instead of virgin. Young women and girls give birth to children every day. There is nothing out of the ordinary about that. However, when a virgin gives birth, that is extraordinary. So this is a possible answer as to why only Mathew talks about the visit by the three Magi.

I thought it might be interesting to compare and contrast the kingdom of Herod and the Kingdom of Jesus. The more I did this the more I realized that it is an example of love and fear. I have often said that humans only have two root emotions. That being either love or fear. All of our emotions can be traced back to either one.

Herod ruled his kingdom out of fear. Herod also lived his life in horrible fear. He had a great fear of being deposed, overthrown or even challenged. Herod's fear made him extremely cruel to his people and family. His fear made him very paranoid so that he could not trust anyone around himself. It was said that a pig was safer in Herod's kingdom than his own son. Herod did not eat pork so he wouldn't kill a pig to eat it. He had no problem killing his son if he thought he was a threat to his power. Herod's paranoia would twist his mind so badly that he feared an infant king would replace him. That is why the Holy family fled to Egypt after Jesus was born. His fear would make him order the murder of all the baby boys two years old and under with the hope of killing Jesus. Herod's was a brutally earthly kingdom. It was rooted in and ruled by fear. All earthly kingdoms ultimately have their end.

Then Jesus would come thirty years later and preach about another kingdom. His Kingdom was the Kingdom of God and it was rooted in love and the inclusion of all people. Everyone was welcome to be a part of this Kingdom. The Kingdom that Jesus talked about welcomed lepers, orphans, children, widows, prostitutes, tax collectors and members of the Sanhedrin. The commandment that Jesus's Kingdom worked with was love. John 13: 34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have

love for one another.” Not only is love a commandment but it is now a mark of discipleship.

The Kingdom that Jesus preached about was both earthly and Heavenly. Jesus tells us that there is great love between Himself and God the Father. We can only assume that Heaven is run and build on love also. Jesus reveals that love to us here on earth. With the hope that we can build that loving Heaven here on earth. It is all about love. The love between Jesus and God and Jesus and us and the love between you and others.

Herod murdered and killed people out of fear. The only One who died out of love was Jesus. Herod tried to hold on to power with a tight grip. Jesus submitted to the will of His father and opened His arms on the cross for all of us. Two very different styles of managing a kingdom. They contrast the difference between love and fear very well. People are still talking about Jesus two thousand years later. People are trying to live their lives in imitation of His life here on earth. All based on love that Jesus showed us. Which is a reflection of the love in Heaven. Not many people try to live their lives as Herod did. There are a few but we try to avoid those countries. As followers of Jesus it is our responsibility to love as Jesus loved. To further build and promote His kingdom of love here on earth. I pray that God will continue to bless and keep you with good health and much happiness in 2022. It has got to be better than last year, Pastor D.