



# What Lessons Do We Learn from the Wise Men?

Considering a Message from Matthew 2:1-12

For the Week of January 6th, 2019

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*On the Festival of Epiphany, we celebrate the visit of the Gentile strangers from the East—the “Magi”—who were led by God to come and worship the child, Jesus (as recorded in the Gospel Lesson for Epiphany—our Sermon text). The darkness of sin that had covered the entire earth is now lifted because God has chosen to reveal the great Light of the World—Christ—who has come! St. Paul points us in the Epistle Lesson to the work that Jesus has carried out so that sinners who have faith in Jesus might be found “Justified” (“declared righteous”) before God. He emphasizes that this applies to Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus has come to be the Savior of the World!—a prominent theme on Epiphany Sunday and throughout this upcoming Epiphany season. As we gather together around God’s Word and Sacraments in church (—or even here in our Connect Groups!)—God continues to grant us an “Epiphany”. He reveals His plan to us—a divine plan that brings about our forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. May we always rejoice and worship Him as the Wise Men did when God reveals His Love—Our Savior to us!*

**Opening Prayer:** We thank You Heavenly Father for bringing us together. Send Your Holy Spirit to help us grow in faith and love, especially as we gather together with our fellow Christians. We ask you to reveal to us, and enlighten us, in the work of Your Son, Jesus Christ, so that we may rejoice in what He has done for our salvation—and like the Wise Men bow our hearts in worship to Him. Give us opportunities to encourage and point others to this One Whom You have revealed as the Savior of the World. We pray this in His name, Amen.

## CONNECT to Each Other

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For this first session, take a few moments to get to know each other better—especially anyone who might be new or unfamiliar to the people in your group. In @ a minute each, have every person introduce themselves with: first/last name, immediate family, where you work(ed) how long you’ve been a member of Mt. Olive, and one thing you like to help others remember you: *“I’m the guy or gal who likes to...”*

1. First of all what is meant by “Epiphany”? Have each person describe a time when they experienced an “Epiphany.”

## CONNECT to the Word—*Read the Bible text together (also consider its context): Matthew 2:1-12*

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2. Christians are to hold to what God’s Word says—not more, not less. This account of the “Wise Men” is a place where some ideas are often inserted into the story. There are things about the “Wise Men” that we think we know—and yet these details are NOT based on what the Bible says about them, but rather based on traditions developed later. First of all, list off some common things that we think we know about the Wise Men. Compare these details that are familiar with what the account from Matthew 2 actually says.

3. Why do you think the Wise Men showed up in Jerusalem at Herod's Palace? Would Bethlehem be a surprising place for the king to be born? Why/Why Not?



4. The Wise Men's observation of nature was only able to bring them so far. What else was needed—what else did God choose to guide and direct them as He was revealing to them the "Newborn King of the Jews"?

5. We think of the "Wise Men" often as being "Wise" in a positive sense—yet as we see throughout this account, their own wisdom and knowledge cannot reveal the Christ to them—only God can do that. How should we characterize these "Wise Men" (—or perhaps, it would be better to call them "Magi")—why is it a surprising choice for God to reveal the Christ to *them*? Why is this comforting for us?

6. Read Together Isaiah 55:8-9. How does this verse connect to our Sermon Message? In what ways does God's plan not match up with our human wisdom or ways of thinking?

## CONNECT to Life

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7. God often reveals Himself and His Divine Plan in unexpected or surprising ways. In what seemingly unexpected places does God reveal Himself to us today?

8. Though He reveals Himself in seemingly small, lowly places, how should *we* react when God reveals Himself to us in these places?

9. How did the hymns, other lessons, parts of the service, etc. fit together with the Sermon message and overall theme for the day?

## CONNECT in Prayer—*In closing & throughout the week!*

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- PLEASE OFFER PRAYERS that God continues to REVEAL His Salvation through Jesus to the nations—and also to us! AND that we might rejoice and Worship Him where He is revealed to us!
- PRAY for the ongoing work of our Building Project and for those working on our project.
- PRAY for the Wosmek Family—Peace members, former Mt. Olive School family, as they mourn the death of husband and father, Brad.
- PRAY for Ernie Lillo—for recovery and healing after surgery and that this operation might help him get back on his feet. ALSO continued prayers for Cory Brooks—son of Diann and Bob Brooks—who recovers from an illness in Denver.
- PRAY for the Newly born and Baptized babies of the Congregation (including Brynlee Boxrud—whose baptism was affirmed Sunday!)—And our expecting mothers and their children.

