

“Incarnation - Jesus, You Are Lord”

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Graphics: manger, fish

Big Truth: Just as we desire physical contact and closeness to others, God desired for us to know Him physically and relationally close. God sent Jesus to earth in the form of a child so that we could know Him. He taught and suffered and died so we would know Him. He rose again, bodily, so that we would know Him. All that, also, so we would know ourselves. Jesus is King. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus is Holy. Jesus is Lord.

Focus Phrase: Jesus, You are Lord of the world and my life. I bow down before you.

1. Introduction

- A. **OPENING VIDEO/AUDIO** - *The Fourth Wise Man*
- B. I'm pretty sure the journey of the Magi to see the Messiah didn't happen anything close to that, but you never know...
- C. And, of course, the message in the middle of the joking was pretty clear: those who are seeking Jesus are hoping that He's what He claims to be. Isn't that a yearning in our hearts as well?
- D. We've spent 6 weeks on a journey ourselves...we've spent time taking a fresh look at the Incarnation - God becoming flesh in Jesus and dwelling among us. It's taken us from the beginning of Advent, through Christmas Eve, and now, we come to end of the Christmas season.
- E. We've spent many weeks seeking Jesus. And we **FOUND** Him! We confessed that He is our **King**. He is our **Savior**. He is our **Emmanuel**. He is our **Light of the World**. He is **Holy**.
- F. But there's one final confession we need to make. It's a confession that has been the bedrock of the Christian church since the earliest days of the church.
- G. This one confession is what got many of the earliest followers of Jesus mocked, tortured, and even killed - martyred for faith in a person and His life, death, and resurrection.
- H. This confession is **THE** most radical one yet...and flies in the face of every earthly king, ruler, and government. It flies in the face of culture, religion, and any personal pursuit. It is a confession that changes your life. And if you are willing to confess it, then you also must be prepared to change everything about you, your life, your family, and your worldview...starting the moment the words come out of your mouth.
- I. The confession is: **Jesus, You Are Lord**. That may seem fairly easy, but as we'll see from our scripture readings today, and the witness of the early church, it's very **VERY** costly.

- J. AND it is THE one and ONLY way that a person makes the transition from a life apart from God to a life WITH God.
- K. The Apostle Paul was pretty clear when he wrote in Romans 10:9-10: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”
- L. And, then, as we’ll see, there’s a journey that begins into which we spend the rest of our earthly lives and everlasting life growing.
- M. Let’s open our bibles to Matthew chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Last week, we read about Jesus being circumcised when he was 8 days old to be set apart for God’s holy purposes.
- N. Our scripture today begins around the time of Jesus’ birth and ends some 2-3 years later. Some Magi from the east, probably in the region of modern-day Iran, make a journey to see Jesus, guided by a star that God placed in the sky for this specific holy purpose.
- O. But more than anything else, these Magi came to bow down to Jesus, the Lord. Let’s read...Matthew 2:1-12...

2. Scripture

A. READ Matthew 2:1-12

- B. So, who were these Magi from the east?
- C. Well, first, let’s get some myths out of the way.
 - i. First one is that there were three wise men. Probably not so. The tradition that there were 3 wise men simply comes from the fact that Matthew mentions 3 gifts - gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
 - ii. The second one is that these Magi came to see Jesus in his crib. Also probably not true, since it would’ve taken them a long time - years most likely - to get to where Jesus was after He was born.
- D. The term Magi - from which we get our word *magician* - refers to learned men from Persia (modern-day Iran) who were a specific caste of priests of the Zoroastrian religion. They studied the stars, believing that they told of events on earth. We might call them astrologers today. And while we don’t believe in astrology in the new-age sense it’s become, we DO know that God made the stars, can reorient them if He likes, and can, indeed, lead someone who is looking by way of the stars.
- E. These Magi were not Jewish. They were Gentile foreigners practicing a pagan religion. Yet - and this is why Matthew includes them in his narrative of Jesus’ birth - they are drawn to Jesus - having read the Jewish prophecies about him.

- F. God's grace - God's wooing power for all on earth - is so evident here. Not only does God desire that the Jewish nation be saved through Jesus, the Messiah, but all the earth be saved from their sin through Him.
- G. These Magi were earnest in their faith about what was happening...and they may not have known exactly what they'd find or what they'd experience until they got to Jesus - who was now probably a toddler.
- H. One thing IS for certain: this journey was costly. Not only were their gifts costly, for sure, but the journey itself - years on the road - was expensive, exhausting, requiring perseverance and vision. And, in the end, they then had to go back home...by a LONGER route!
- I. The culmination of the story comes in verse 11. The Magi have journeyed, followed the moving star which now stopped over where the holy family was, and they entered the house.
- J. And in this scene that I can only describe as "powerfully tender" they bowed down - they knelt down - and paid Jesus homage. That word homage comes from the Greek word proskuneo which means **to worship**.
- K. These wealthy scholars, who travelled far, and spent countless money, duck their heads into the house where Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were living, and they bowed down and worshiped this toddler! It's **absurd!**
- L. And yet, in that ONE act of humility and honor and wonder, they were saying that the prophecies were fulfilled, the God of the Jews was real, and the future was beginning to unfold.
- M. And EVERYTHING the church has confessed about Jesus since the very beginning is true: Jesus IS Lord of all - Savior, King, Emmanuel, and Light of the World. Jesus is Holy.
- N. And not only is he Lord...and He is **Lord of Lords!** He is the one who is over all...in charge of all...the authority over all.
- O. The term Lord is THE most frequently used term for Jesus in the entire NT - used over 600 times.
- P. We don't really use the term Lord anymore to refer to anyone but Jesus. It comes from the Old English word hlafweard which means loaf-warden. Basically, the person who is responsible for the bread and food of a kingdom is the one in charge. Loaf-warden eventually got shortened to lo-ard, which then become "lord".
- Q. So, we might call someone lord still today, but Jesus is Lord of Lords. Revelation 19:16 identifies Jesus as "...King of Kings and Lord of Lords."
- R. King Herod would've not only been angry about the Magi using the term "king" for the child that was born, but he would've also wanted to destroy the threat, which is why he asked the Magi to let him know where the child was.

- S. They, of course, did not do that, having followed the star and then bowed down to Jesus. They were convinced that Jesus was the true King and Lord.
- T. Now, in some ways the star that appeared represents the Magi's willingness to bow down to Jesus as Lord. But the earliest followers of Jesus after his resurrection had yet another symbol they used to identify Jesus as Lord. The fish or ichthus.
 - i. Because these early disciples confessed Jesus alone as Lord, and not Caesar or any ruler on any throne, their lives were put in danger as subversives, similar to Herod's anger at Jesus.
 - ii. The early church in Jerusalem met in secret in people's houses. But they didn't have social media, right? So they used the symbol of a fish to mark the house churches where people could gather. They used the ichthus for two reasons. One, the fish was common enough and yet prominent enough in the ministry of Jesus that people could identify with it.
 - iii. It was also an acronym for Jesus Christ Son of God and Savior. The early church believed so fully in the full gospel story about Jesus that they were willing to confess Jesus is Lord, despite the very real possibility that that confession would lead to persecution or death.

3. Application

- A. In our lives, the confession that Jesus is Lord sometimes has about as much impact on the world as the outfielder statistics in Major League Baseball.
- B. My suspicion is that the reason WHY that's true is because you and I are not truly confessing Jesus is Lord in the same ways that were as risky and threatening as in the first century.
- C. What would it look like for you and me to have such an impact on the world because we confessed Jesus is Lord?
- D. There is a day coming, church, when that confession will not be received well...that day is already here, possibly. I'm not smart enough to know why people are more and more unwilling to hear that confession, but I suspect it has something to do with the world's unwillingness to want to make the costly sacrifice to seek Jesus, kneel down before Him, offer everything they have, and then get on the road and live life FOR him only.
- E. So, my question to you is two-fold:
 - i. Do you believe that Jesus is the Lord? (pause) and...
 - ii. Is Jesus YOUR Lord?
- F. In Luke 2:11, when the angels appeared to the shepherds in the fields after Jesus was born, they said, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born

to you; he is the Messiah, *the* Lord.” Not A Lord...but THE Lord. Unique, authority, Lord of all Lords.

- G. The application here is pretty straight-forward in order to not only confess that Jesus is Lord, but that he is Lord of YOUR LIFE. Follow the way of the Magi:
- i. **Seek Jesus and then kneel before him.** Make it your life’s mission to seek Jesus every day. And then bow down, physically and spiritually to Him. If you’re not in the habit, kneel in prayer and worship before Him. Our head and body position speak about our humility. Jesus is LORD...and we bow before Him.
 - ii. And, **Open yourself and offer your gifts.** Jesus doesn’t NEED your gifts, but Jesus wants you to offer yourself and your spiritual and physical gifts to Him every day. And then,
 - iii. **Get on the road for Him.** Be in ministry and service and worship and witness. Share what you have in community. Live your life in faith that Jesus IS Lord of Lords!
- H. The song we sang last week in worship called In The Bleak Midwinter captures it. The final verse sings: “What can I give Him, Poor as I am? If I were a Shepherd I would bring a lamb; If I were a Wise Man I would do my part, Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.”
- I. Adam Hamilton says, “To be Christian is not only to say, but to live the words Jesus is Lord.”
- J. Jesus is Lord...and your Lord wants your heart.

4. Conclusion

- A. VIDEO/AUDIO - *The First Christmas: The Wise Man*
- B. We sing Joy to the World as one of our most favorite Christmas songs. As we wrap up this series, I pray that the JOY of Jesus be yours as you hail Him as your **King**. May you taste of the hope and mercy he offers as you receive Him as your **Savior**. May you feel His presence and peace as you accept Him as **Emmanuel**. May you be lit up and reflect Him as your **Light of the World**. May He be your Lord, guiding, leading, and directing your path. May His holiness keep making YOU holy.
- C. As we prepare to come to the Table, I want us to, with one voice together, lift up the confession, “Jesus, You Are Lord!” There is no other place that threatens everything this world is trying to convince us to believe than this Table and the confession we make when we enter into communion with Jesus the Lord.
- D. As his people, this confession doesn’t come from here (head), but from here (heart). So, let’s look up, and three times, confess together: “Jesus, You Are Lord” (3 times). Confess this with me... “Jesus, You Are Lord!”

- E. Let's also pray together (words on screen). This is the Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition. This prayer is a great prayer for the beginning of 2021 and it's all about Jesus being the Lord of our lives. "I am no longer my own, but yours. Put me to what you will, place me with whom you will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for you or set aside for you, Praised for you or criticized for you. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and holy God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, you are mine, and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, Let it also be made in heaven. Amen."
- F. Let's come to the table...