

Remnant Life Church
December 10, 2017
Christmas Service
“The Politician and the Wise Men”

READ - Matt 2:1-12

- The wise men of the nativity story have been called many things
 - Magi (pronounced MAY-jeye) - the plural of MAY-gus
 - A Magus was a member of a hereditary priestly class among the Medes and Persians of biblical time
 - Priests of Zoroastrianism
 - The counterpart to the nation of Israel’s hereditary priestly line of the Levites in the OT
 - They were called astronomers
 - They obviously studied the stars
 - Kings – they would certainly have had the appearance of kings in all their finery
 - Magicians and sorcerers
 - Not fully sure but they were, undoubtedly, curious
- You can imagine the long caravan of travelers
 - The front of Hallmark cards today show 3 lonely, well-dressed camel riders
 - That would not have been the case
 - Humility was not a requirement to be a priest in the kingdoms of Mede and Persia – they would have been dressed in all their splendor to meet a future king
 - They would have come from the Kurdistan Region of what today would be Northern Iraq to the town of Bethlehem
 - A distance of over 800 miles
 - Would have taken them nearly 2 months to make the journey
- Where did they go first?
 - To Herod’s temple – where else would you expect to find a newborn king?
 - When Herod gets word of this he does not panic because he is a professional politician
 - After all Rome put him in place to rule over his own people – Herod was a Jew
 - His chief priests and teachers of the law told him the birthplace would be in Bethlehem
 - He immediately attempts to spin the situation to his advantage
 - Vs 7-8 - *Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”*
 - But, of course, he had no intention of going to worship Jesus

- But the Magi did
 - When they found Him, they worshipped Him and brought Him gifts
 - Many of you by now have heard of the true significance and meaning of those gifts
 - Gold – is the gift given to a king
 - Frankincense – is an incense used in the worship of God
 - Myrrh – is used to anoint and prepare a body for burial
 - Of course, we can look at those things now and marvel at what they meant as Jesus' life unfolded
 - But at His birth, had the Magi been given prophetic understanding of who this baby was and what He would mean?
 - Herod, the politician was not interested in any of this, he simply wanted to have this potential usurper killed
 - Which is just what he tried to do when the Magi did not go back to him
 - *V. 16 - When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.*
 - Why did Herod feel that he had to do this?
 - Because the first order of business for a new king was to always kill the old king
 - Herod did not want to lose control
 - Was Herod's response really that much different from what many people today are doing?
 - I don't mean the killing part – but maintaining control
 - For many it is the reason they are not willing to surrender their lives to Jesus
 - The right words might be said, even many of the right things done, but they don't want Jesus to come in and “mess up their lives”
 - That was what concerned Herod, he wanted to keep things just the way they were, the way he wanted them
- It also concerned another group of men in this story that you may have missed
 - *V. 4-6 - When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.*
 - Who were the chief priests? – the temple ministers in charge of worship
 - Who were the teachers of the law? – the scribes and those who kept and made copies of and enforced the Scripture
 - What was the collective name of these men? – the Pharisees

- The same men who had all the knowledge of the Scriptures, but who would fight Jesus every step of His ministry because they did not want to lose control
- What about you this morning, this Christmas season?
 - What of your relationship with Jesus Christ are you missing because you have to be in control?
 - Is your life like that of Herod and the religious leaders missing the true meaning of who Jesus is?
 - Or are you like the Magi
 - Did not fully understand; made the long difficult journey
 - But they knew in their hearts that this had a much greater meaning than following a star and finding a baby
- Let this be the Christmas where you lose control
 - Better yet, let this be the Christmas where you surrender control
 - Surrender your will, your wants, your plans, your desires
 - Surrender your relationships, your possessions, your job
 - Let this be the Christmas when you earnestly and truthfully pray the words that Jesus would one day pray, some 33 years later, “Not my will, but Your will be done!”