

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

December 30, 2018

## **Scripture Reading:** Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 ¶ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## **CHILDREN'S SONG:**

## **CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER:**

Our Father, Which Art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. AMEN

## **MESSAGE:** "Herod's Worker" A Dramatic Monologue

*Scene 1: Enter Baruch*

Hello. My name is Baruch, son of Neriah. I am a Jew. I suddenly find that I now work for Herod, called the so-called "King of the Jews." And I suppose he is the King - he rules a huge area of land - from well past Judea in the South, to well past Galilee in the North, Herod in his own vicious way, has fought his way to be King of the Jews.

Bah! King of the Jews! Imagine someone as "tucked-in-the-pocket" of the Roman Empire as the hated Herod being King of the Jews! Well, Herod is a Jew, and he certainly worked to gain his kingdom - fighting many vicious and crafty battles to win the right to rule the land. And he jealously guards it. Why, Herod has built a string of fortresses in his huge kingdom, just to make sure that he can keep his realm safe so that the Romans don't replace him.

I may work for King Herod, but how I hate him! I hate his greed, his craftiness, his jealousy, ruthlessness, and his selfishness!

That's how I came to be here. It was only a few weeks ago that Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, issued a decree. Issued a decree - he ordered everyone to go to his own hometown to be registered. That's how I ended up back in Jerusalem. My great great-great grandfather was the

friend and personal secretary to the prophet Jeremiah - Oh, the fire which with Jeremiah wrote! Baruch, my ancestor wrote the words of Jeremiah, and them read to the people in the temple. When Herod heard that I had come into Jerusalem to be registered, and that I was related to the Secretary of Jeremiah, well, Herod the Great, the King of the Jews immediately "recruited" me for service, hoping that I would be a help for those coming into Jerusalem to be registered. Well, the registration is almost done here, and is spreading to other towns, but I am still here, awaiting being released from the service of the King of the Jews, the Great and hated Herod.

(Pause)

There has been a real charge in the air lately, and I don't know what it is. Herod is especially jittery during this census. This census is, after all, a stirring up the past - of the Jews revisiting their ancestry, and becoming stronger with it.

And the sky has been strange lately - everyone has noticed it. There is a brightness to the night sky which seems to be so odd. And that brightness seems to be coming this way, coming out from the East. It seems as if just about anything can happen.

(Pause)

Excuse me. I have been called to come for some official reason.

(Pause - Exit and Return)

Wow! That was incredible! I was called to dress in King Herod's servant's best royal robes - but in such a hurry - and then I was rushed to the royal throne. There, I was surrounded by not one, but many kings - kings from the East. Oh, they were royal. Oh, they were dressed well. They told Herod the Great that they had been following the star toward the west. But that star stopped suddenly. They were being lead westward until they were in the area of Judea, but then the star suddenly disappeared.

I was called, along with many other scholars, to try to tell these kings where they should be going.

At first we could not imagine what the star meant. But then they told us that they knew from studying the stars that they were following the path to a new-born king. They said, "*Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the east, and we have come to worship him.*"

As soon as they said that, we scholars all knew - they were coming to

find the Messiah. The scriptures, we knew, made it clear that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the little town of David. The scripture says, *"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel (Micah 5:2)."*

(Pause)

Now, Herod was really disturbed, and it seemed that all Jerusalem with him. Herod had fought hard, and the news of a newborn king, a king of the Jews, would more than likely, mean more war.

He dismissed us with his typical gruffness, but tried to remain kind to the visiting Kings.

I'm going to have to figure this out...

(Pause)

Well, there's something. Those visiting kings are leaving Jerusalem now. Herod is so upset about the news of a newborn king, I bet he will not even miss me. I'm going to follow them.

**Sing "We Three Kings" verse 1**

*Scene 2 - Finding the Magi*

You know, it's only five miles due south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

It's a quick trip downhill, but tonight, it was even faster. The brightness in the sky, a star that light up the entire night sky was brilliant and strong. Stronger than it had ever been. And it glowed right over Bethlehem.

What a feeling!

I lost sight of the Magi, those wealthy astrologers from the East. I don't know how I lost their path, as they had a large caravan of many animals and guards, but I did not worry, knowing that the baby was to be born in Bethlehem, that star guided so strong and bright. It pointed to a house in Bethlehem.

But there was one other way that I knew that I was on track. The Magi themselves were whooping and hollering with joy at the sight of the star. They were so full of joy, that you could hear their voices echo throughout the mountains and hills of Judea.

On coming into the house, the Wise Men from the East bowed and entered. I ran to the house, and saw them opening the first of their treasures - gifts to the newborn king.

**Sing "We Three Kings" verse 2**

*Scene 3: Gold Presented*

I stood in awe. The first gifts presented were of Gold. What a pure

substance is gold, refined into a hard, lustrous substance. The baby shone with the brightness of Gold already, and when the gold was laid before Him, He seemed to beam. With all that Gold, and the baby laying there glowing so beautifully in the light of the star, surrounded by the golden gifts ... Well, I could not but help to think of the temple, shining with the golden ornaments. It was so peaceful - that pure substance being laid so reverently before the pure child. It was a gift for a king. And so much - for the King of kings!

Then, the next gift was offered.

### **Sing "We Three Kings" verse 3**

#### *Scene 4: Frankincense*

Frankincense. What a sweet, glorious incense. The temple was the only place worthy for Frankincense in all Judea. The temple - the place to come with one's offering to be presented before God. No other incense was permitted at the altar - none. And no other use but the temple altar was permitted to use Frankincense in all Judea.

I wondered about giving this to a baby. Frankincense was ONLY used in the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate it for ritual use.

I should stop the kings from giving the frankincense to this baby. It

would be as if they were dedicating the child to be used in ritual himself, and that's not right. That's not what the Messiah is to be ...

Wait. Frankincense was needed in the temple to dedicate that which is to be used by God. Dedicated to be used for cleansing the sins of the people, just like the temple. I wonder. Maybe the Messiah is the about to do just that. Frankincense may just be the perfect gift. A gift for the Lord of all who shall be the holiest of all priests.

The third gift is coming forward.

### **Sing "We Three Kings" verse 4**

#### *Scene 5: Myrrh*

Myrrh. Well, I have only just frequently smelled Myrrh since I have been with Herod the Great in his palace. There, many wealthy travellers come trading, and bring gifts to Herod to please him, Myrrh among them. It is such a bitter-sweet perfume. I have seen it used to refresh furniture, on garments to sweeten the smell, and young maidens have been freshened with it to come before Herod.

But I have smelled it before, as Myrrh is also used for the dead. Myrrh is used in embalming. That makes me feel very strange. These pagan kings bring their gifts to suggest that this baby will be used in the same way as

the temple, but they also foreshadow his death. The Messiah cannot die, his throne is to live on forever. Wait, they now join together to sing one final verse of song.

**Sing "We Three Kings" verse 5**

*Scene 6: I Wonder...*

King, Lord, and sacrifice. I wonder what that means.

(PAUSE)

Well, there seems to be much in store for this baby. I, myself, I am no doubt too old to see this baby do all these wonderful things in His life, but maybe my newborn son, his name is Bartholomew, maybe he will be with this boy (Matthew 10:3). Maybe he will be there when this boy is King, Lord and Sacrifice.

As for me, I hope that Herod has forgotten about me, and yet I am going home to take my family back to my hometown in Galilee.

Bye Sweet baby. The Magi have left you, staying clear of Herod, and I too shall depart having been blessed in your presence. May God be with you, sweet Jesus.

I too choose to honour you as my King, my Lord, and even as my Sacrifice. Jesus, you are THE King of the Jews!