



Matthew 2.1-16

Epiphany 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2010

The Two Kings (verses 1-6)

Today is Epiphany Sunday when we celebrate the revealing of Christ to the Gentiles. It is of course a time of great celebration here in Spain and last year Billie and I were in Tordera for the street procession. I remember the crowded streets, the sense of anticipation and the excitement, especially amongst the children, as the procession came along, with the three kings throwing sweets out into the crowd. Children also queued up to meet one or other of the kings and were asked if they had been good, to see if they deserved to receive a present.

All great fun, however the Bible story is not about three kings but two. Two very different kings:-

The False King - HEROD 'the Great'

- Cruel, unpredictable, tyrannical, even his own family were not safe from him
- His power and authority were very visible – he relied on force and brutality
- He was insecure and fearful when he heard a rumour of a true king's birth
- He was famous for his enraged massacre of innocent children
- His power was actually temporary and limited
- His life ended in confusion & disappointment when Jesus was still a child

The True King - JESUS of Nazareth

- Appeared to be of humble origin
- Suffered danger and insecurity in childhood, like Moses
- Was destined to be a greater saviour than Moses, Joshua and David put together
- Was famous for his kind and gentle treatment of children, women and outcasts
- His power and glory were hidden at first, but real and permanent
- Proved to be the true king of all, but leading in a new and surprising way

Two kinds of Seeker (verses 7-12)

Both desperate to find Jesus but with very different motives:-

HEROD - the False Seeker

- concerned with self, position, reputation.
- Seeks out of jealousy, to master & destroy Jesus
- In spite of his power, determination & skills of deception, he fails to find Jesus. His evil plan is revealed to God and to the magi and fails – but does cause many casualties in the process.

THE MAGI – the True Seekers

- Probably a caste of wise astronomers/astrologers/scientists from Persia/ Arabia. (NB the Bible does not say that they were kings, how many there were, whether they were male or female!)
- They seek J with pure hearts and motives
- They rejoice (10) when the star guides them to him
- They worship him (11)
- They give him gifts suitable for a king (11)
- They are obedient to God's warning not to return to Herod (12).



These WISE people were rewarded in their HONEST search for the TRUE king with an EPIPHANY; a revelation of Jesus, the Son of God.

Which kind of seekers are we? Not Herods I'm sure, but perhaps our motives are mixed...

Do I for instance-

- enjoy my good reputation as a Christian?
- hope for a payback from God?
- try to bargain with God?
- feel resentful to God when the road is hard?
- Use God's gifts selfishly?

We probably all have mixed motives – not surprising because we are all just sinners in a recovery programme!

### A New Relationship (verses 13-16)

Ultimately, what we need is a new kind of relationship with God. We see a model of this in the experience of the escape of the Holy Family to Egypt, following the angel's warning. It only gets the briefest of mentions, but must have been a terrifying episode and a threat to defeat all God's promises about Jesus – the promises which Joseph and Mary had committed their lives to. How would that feel for you? How much time did you have to think about your move to Barcelona? Perhaps it was a move you planned and chose, which was exciting.

But what if you had a small child under two years old and were suddenly told your lives are in danger, you have to leave the country, tonight and go to live in Morocco until further notice?

And what if Mary and Joseph had said 'no' or just frozen in fear and been unable to travel? How might the course of history have been affected?

But their terrifying experience was also an experience of the protection and guidance and love and power of God, even in the harshest circumstances. Faith was required, faith was tested and faith was rewarded.

The journey of faith is not easy, as we see from the journeys of the Magi and the Holy family, which were fraught with danger. But the rewards of faith are everlasting and priceless and world-changing. As we share the faith of Mary and Joseph may we also enjoy that deep relationship of trust with our Heavenly Father, which the coming of Jesus made possible.

Like the Magi, may we always:-

*Seek Sincerely* – longing to see Jesus for his own sake and to see his Kingdom come on earth

*Worship Wholeheartedly* – making our whole lives an expression of gratitude for his gift of salvation

*Give Generously* – offering our physical, monetary and spiritual gifts, all of which God gave us, for use in his service.

DO enjoy your Reyes celebrations – I think it is a great festival, even if some of the details might not fit what is in the Bible.



St George's Church  
BARCELONA

HAVE FUN, but remember the important thing about the Magi/Reyes is that they were TRUE SEEKERS of the TRUE KING. May the same be true of us and may Christ be revealed day by day, TO us and THROUGH us.