

Epiphany!

sermon discussion guide

based on **Matthew 2.1-12** from 6/1/19

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

Intro: It seems strange to be talking about the Christmas story in January (even though 6th Jan is the traditional time to look at this story!). Why do you think our culture moves on from Christmas so quickly?

Read Matthew 2.1-12

This is a story about 2 kings (not 3!) – an established king and a new rival. Herod was a vicious king, ordering the killing of some of his own family as well as plenty of others (eg see 2.16). Jesus is introduced to us as a shepherd-king (v6 – quoting Micah 5.2). What biblical resonances can you think of for Jesus as a shepherd-king? How is Jesus being a shepherd-king good news for our world, in contrast to the rule of people like Herod?

This is also a story about worship (v2, 8, 11). Dan suggested that Herod worshipped power. Do you agree / disagree? Why? How were Herod's actions influenced by his worship?

Everyone (even those who say "I'm not the religious sort") worship something or someone. What sort of things do your friends worship?

Some of the signs that we worship something include:

- * in our pursuit of what we worship, we do irrational things or things that are bad for us or others;
- * we sacrifice too much time or money in pursuit of them – more than we can afford;
- * we sacrifice key relationships by putting priority on the object of our worship;
- * we'd consider life not worth living if the object of our worship was suddenly taken away.

Can you think of examples of those things? What other traits would you add to the list?

Who or what are you tempted to worship more than Jesus?

If the wise men thought that Jesus was worthy of such worship (time, effort, treasures, prostrating themselves etc), what extra reasons do we have to worship him?

How is Jesus superior to the idols you mentioned previously?

How does this passage speak to our desire to be a God-dependent, grace-filled, Bible-based, mission-focused, authentic community?

Up: Spend time praising Jesus as the shepherd-king

In: How can you help each other avoid falling into worshipping idols, and encourage each other to worship King Jesus?

Out: Pray for any friends or family who came to Christmas services or expressed an interest in them. Pray that some would be willing to engage with the upcoming "Jesus the Game Changer" course.