

## **Matthew 2:1-12, The Grace of God leads us home**

**By Rev/Dr. Solomon Yadessa,**

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Peace, grace, and mercy from our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Our sermon message today is based on the Gospel text from Matthew 2:1-12.

We all use GPS, trusting it to get us to our destination. But sometimes, GPS takes us to the wrong destination. We start driving, relying on the GPS; we follow it, until it notifies us, "You have arrived at your destination." We then begin to look around and discover that we are in the wrong place.

We then start to seek several ways to return to our route. Driving to a nearby gas station or residence to inquire is one option. That was similar to what the Magi, the wise men, experienced in our text today.

The magi traveled from the east. They had nothing but a star to lead them in their quest. They were on their way to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born and was lying in a manger. However, they ended up in Jerusalem, about 6 miles away (about three hours on foot). They must have lost track of the direction of the star leading them. While in Jerusalem, they started to ask people, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and has come to worship him."

V 4

These people are called wise men, but how could they lose their way? What happened? It may not be exactly like the internet connection, but perhaps they lost a spiritual connection with the source of their direction.

Spiritual disconnection can inevitably arise when we lose contact with the One who leads us. When sin creeps into our lives, our wisdom cannot spare us from losing our direction, destination, and purpose.

We are not different from those wise men. When we tragically lose our way, we unwittingly become wanderers in this chaotic world. When sin creeps into a person's life, wandering is the result.

In the Bible, wandering and wanderers have been mentioned several times. I can read some of the texts from the biblical references that connect sin and wandering.

In Genesis 4:14, Cain after he killed his own brother said to God, "Behold, you have steered me today away from the ground, and from your face, I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me".

Another verse is from Hosea 9:17: "My God will reject them because they have not listened to him; they shall be wanderers among the nations ". We are not better than these wanderers if we do not confess our sins. That is why we're instructed to practice repentance daily, as well as confessions and absolution weekly in our church.

The wise men lost direction to their destination. They wandered in the city of Jerusalem, asking questions. The news of these strange incomers reached the ears of king Herod. King Herod was disturbed, especially when he heard about the birth of a newborn king who was to be worshiped. He called a meeting of leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the messiah supposed to be born?" Citing the prophet Micah, they answered him by saying, "In Bethlehem in Judea."

"But, you, o Bethlehem from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." V.2

After he heard from the leading priests and teachers of religious law, then King Herod summoned the wise men for a private meeting. He learned from them when the star first appeared. They have talked about many things it seems, including the star leading them. I think that could also increase his disturbances. He advised them to go find the baby king and report back to him so that he could also go and worship the newborn king. That does not sound true. No king can easily be willing to serve and worship another king, especially when it is a baby king.

Herod released them. Thank God. He could have detained them for years. What a relief for all of them! After the king advised them to go, the wise men went their way. Now they are free to go. And the star, whose track they had lost, started to escort them to their destination. The guiding star went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was (V 9). When they saw the star resting over the place where the child was, they were filled with joy. Now there is no more confusion. How did this happen? I can produce no explanation other than God's grace that reached out to them. Even more, when we are exhausted, God's grace

revives us to aid us back on track. When our own wisdom fails to bring us to the Lord, the Lord comes to us through His grace. Indeed, amid our doubts, God's grace can redirect us toward our Lord. When we are unable to find our way to God, He finds us through His grace. We cannot be saved by our own wisdom. God's saving grace comes to us through the word and sacraments. We are saved by Grace through faith. Faith comes through hearing the word of God.

The wise men found where the newborn king was. They entered the house, and there was the child with his mother, Mary. First thing first. They fell down and worshiped him. This text is a perfect reference from the Bible that Jesus was worshipped. Some religions teach that Jesus was never worshipped. Yes, He was worshipped. After worship, they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They accomplished their mission. Notice here. They worshiped him first and then offered him their gifts.

The worshiper receives forgiveness of sins and grace from God. Then can offer gifts. When we are forgiven and free from our sins, we will be able to give God what is due to Him, offerings and tithes. We reap joy and spread joy, as a celebration of our salvation. That is why offerings and tithes are part of our worship.

When their mission was accomplished and it was time to flee, the wise men returned to their own country. They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, but to take a different route.

The wise men did hold on to the gifts intended for the newborn king. Loss of direction, arrest, and fear didn't make them lose the gifts. They held on to them.

The grace helped them to continue treasuring and carrying the gifts. In the midst of their lostness, they kept the gifts they intended for the newborn king. Grace helped them.

Grace comes from the Death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Today, grace comes to us through the word and sacraments. This grace helps you and me to stay the course of our faith journey. If this grace wasn't there for me, personally, I wouldn't have been standing here preaching the word today. The grace of God takes us home. This grace of God, the Gospel, must be shared with those who didn't hear the message of salvation.

The Magi returned home. Oh boy! What a remarkably unusual journey. So many things to talk about with their families and communities. If not for the grace of God, they wouldn't have made it. When their wisdom couldn't help, the grace of God bore them through.

The grace of God takes us home. No matter how frightening the challenges might be, no matter how frail you get because of age and illness, and no matter how severe persecution can be, the grace of God will carry you through. **I repeat it:** the grace of God will lead you home.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen

