



GOD CAME NEAR

“When the Future Looks Grim”

Matthew 2:1-12

This week we examine one of the most familiar of all Bible stories: the visit of the Magi, those “wise men from the east,” to the child Jesus.

As to the timing of this event, most people miss the details in verse 11. It was not to the manger of Bethlehem that the wise men came, but to a “house.” Also, Matthew calls Jesus a “child,” using a Greek word that most often refers not to a newborn baby but to an older child. Jesus was now at least six weeks old, if not one or even two years old (see Matthew 2:16). When the wise men arrived to worship the child Jesus, the events described in Luke 2:8-38 had already taken place. Jesus had been circumcised at the age of eight days, and the rites of purification required at the age of forty days had taken place in the Jerusalem temple. After that, it seems Joseph and Mary took up temporary residence in a house in Bethlehem. Meanwhile, the wise men had been seeking the promised Messiah, and King Herod was intent on his destruction.



KNOWING GOD

Read Matthew 2:1-12. How was the visit of the wise men a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3?

Did King Herod really want to worship the child reported to be the king of the Jews? How do you know?

How did the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ set the tenor for the rest of Jesus' life?



GROWING TOGETHER

When you think about the future, what worries you?

How do the early childhood experiences of Jesus speak to your worries about the future?

If Jesus' birth had taken place in our lifetime instead of the first century, who do you suppose might be the modern-day counterparts of the wise men? What gifts might they have brought to the King?



SERVING OTHERS

Besides Mary and Joseph, the first worshipers of the child Jesus were poor Jewish shepherds and Gentile astronomers. The religious establishment of the day took offense at this. What implications for the mission of UPC do you see here?

The wise men's gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh were extremely costly. Is your financial support of the church a true sacrifice? What adjustments do you need to make in your lifestyle and spending habits in order to be a more generous giver?



IN YOUR FAMILY...

Jesus was born in the shadow of danger and persecution. What is it costing you to be a family that follows and honors Jesus? Might God be calling you to a more radical lifestyle of giving and serving than where you are currently?

For the wise men of Matthew 2, knowing and worshiping the King of kings was of primary importance. Is that true of your family as well?

SERMON NOTES