

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Title: "O Worship the King"

Time: 12/29/2024

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The song we sang a moment ago, "O Worship the King," was authored by an Englishman named Sir Robert Grant. As his title suggests, Robert Grant was an accomplished man who achieved knighthood as a result of the great exploits of his life.

Born in India, he was the son of the Chairman of the Directors of the East India Company. He was a highly educated Cambridge graduate who earned the Chancellor's Medal there. A lawyer, he worked as a commissioner in England's bankruptcy court.

Later Grant was elected to the House of Commons, where he became known as a champion against the anti-Semitism codified in some of the early 19th century laws of that land. He finished his decorated career and life serving in two honorable posts as his nation's Judge Advocate General and later as the Governor of Bombay.

Yet in spite of all the mighty accomplishments this man achieved during his lifetime, the greatest and most influential act he ever performed on behalf of his fellow man was a private act of worship that was unknown to the world until after his death. In one of his times alone with the Lord, Robert Grant wrote a poem that became the hymn we sang to worship the King this morning, "O Worship the King."

From heaven's perspective, worshipping the King is the greatest thing you and I can do as human beings; it is the best possible thing we can achieve. We have a wonderful example in this Christmas story of some Gentile men from the East who understood this important truth.

The need to worship Christ is a major emphasis of the passage before us as it is of the rest of the book of Matthew (2:2, 8, 11, 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 20:20, 28:9, 28:17; this is all very significant, of course, in the light of 4:9-10 – worship *only the Lord thy God*). Worshipping is very simply falling down before someone and grabbing his feet in these passages. They bring to mind “O Holy Night’s” “fall on your knees” (v.11). Are we here this morning to do that? Have we done that this week?

Perhaps no hymn emphasizes the importance of worshipping Christ like “O Worship the King,” and no text of Scripture emphasizes this theme like Matt. 2:1-12. I want us to learn four things about our need to worship the King this morning.

I. We worship the King in days like the days of Herod the king (2:1, 3, 7-8, 12).

Illustration: The Herod we read about in this passage is known to history as Herod the Great. He was an Idumean (the name for the conquered people of Edom), not a Jew, and his only claim to the throne in Palestine was the appointment of the Roman Caesar. This happened around 40 B.C..

He did what he could to curry favor with his subjects, making elaborate improvements to the temple (the temple of Christ’s day has come to be known as “Herod’s temple”) and working to mitigate famine food shortages.

But Herod’s royal identity crisis made him paranoid as a ruler. He married a Jewess from the popular Maccabean line, but later had her killed under suspicion of treason. He also killed two of his sons. His suspicions became severe as his health failed later in life, and that is when the wise men come calling. Herod does not live much past his order later in this chapter to have the infants of Bethlehem killed.

Application: So what is it like to worship the true King in the days of Herod the king? Well, it is difficult, dangerous even, to worship the true King in a day like this. One must be ready to face some trouble if worship is what he wants to do (v. 3). One must be ready to face opposition in a day like this if worship is what he wants to do (vv. 7-8, 12).

All over the world this morning, Christian believers are worshipping the King under the real threat of bodily harm. We have a whole list of countries, mostly atheistic or Islamic, that we pray for because the worshippers of Christ in those places risk their lives to worship Him.

We do not yet face that danger this morning, but Satan is still very interested in making worship rare in our day as he was in the days of Herod the king. We are too busy making money to worship; we have too many recreational opportunities to worship; there is too much that is great on TV to worship.

We need to understand that there are going to be forces in our day and in our lives that are designed by our enemy to keep us from worshipping our King. Is there something keeping you from the most important thing you can possibly do – to worship the King daily, consistently, and faithfully?

II. We worship the King with our Bibles (2:2, 4-6).

Illustration: John Newton was the former slave trader who authored “Amazing Grace.” That is a wonderful song about a wonderful truth and one that has caught on as a favorite even in the circles of pop culture. A less well-known hymn by the same author, one that will never catch on in the world at large, is titled, “Precious Bible, What A Treasure.” The first of six verses lauding the Word of God goes this way:

“Precious Bible! What a treasure
Does the Word of God afford?

All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword.
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more."

The true recipients of amazing grace will agree with John Newton that their own precious Bibles are a true treasure. They will need no more. Our passage indicates the importance of our Bibles to true worship in two ways.

1. True worship includes learning biblical doctrine.

The miraculous star could only say so much about this King. It left a lot of details out. When the scribes and priests turned in their Bibles to Micah 5:2, they helped the wise men understand not only where the child was, but also that He was the long-promised descendant of Judah who would save, that He was the eternal Son of the living God whose goings forth were from everlasting, and that He was the Davidic Shepherd who would ultimately rule His people Israel.

None of this could the star say, and our worship is impoverished unless it is centered around the truth of the Word of God. Beware of worship styles and practices that seek to lessen the worshippers' focus on the doctrine of the Word of God.

2. True worship includes obeying biblical doctrine.

In verses 4-6, the chief priest, scribes, Herod, and the wise men all learn that the birthplace of the Messiah is Bethlehem, but only the wise men go to worship. It is not enough to say that biblical doctrine is important to us and our families; it is not enough to say that we believe it is true, or even to be sincere about saying so; we need to put feet to our profession. Faith without works is dead. Salvation without the obedience of baptism and public local church ministry is fruitless. Our Savior is worthy of the obedience of the nations (Matt. 28:19-20).

No one in this group doubted for a second that the Bible they were reading was the authoritative and reliably true Word of God, and yet this understanding affected the actions of only the wise men. The priests and scribes seem to miss the prophecy's importance, and Herod plots to find a way to stop the fulfillment of its promise and kill the promise's King.

When we learn Bible truth, we need to obey it. Obedience is part of the proper worship of the King. Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, *that we may observe all the words of this law.*"

III. We worship the King with exceedingly great joy (2:9-10).

Application: There is a tremendous emphasis on the joy that worship brings these men in these verses – *an exceedingly great joy*. This is the kind of joy that makes it difficult to speak as you are praying and suddenly overwhelmed with the amazing grace and goodness of God. I have heard prayers like that in this place. I have heard them quite a bit at our men's prayer meeting on Tuesday mornings. There is no thrill like the thrill of true worship. There is no joy like the joy of realizing how much God loves you. Good news must bring great joy.

Now, I am not saying that all of the Christian experience is joyful and thrilling in this way, but I am saying that we need these times of refreshing. We need to be genuinely thrilled through worship from time to time in order to face those times of great difficulty, sadness, and hardship.

So remember the thrilling times. The wise men likely never experienced a thrill like this one again, but this one they could remember when things got tough. Worship the King with exceedingly great joy. Remember the times that has happened to you. Ask the Lord to help you find that joy of worship each time you bow before Him.

IV. We worship the King with meaningful gifts (2:11).

Application: Matthew is the disciple who was saved out of a life of covetousness as a tax collector. Matthew the tax collector has a lot to say about treasure in his Gospel:

2:11, "And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

12:34-35, "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

13:44, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

13:52, "Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

19:21, "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

What is clear from all of these passages in Matthew's Gospel is that we all have treasures that need to be opened up to the Lord's use, and that this presentation is an important part of our worship of the King.

Conclusion: In that last passage (Matt. 19:21), the rich young ruler is told to go sell everything he has, give it to the poor, follow Christ, and find true treasure in heaven.

That is what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves, and the truth is only One person ever did that. It was the King we worship. He lost everything He had, and gave Himself to poor sinners, that they might possess what He had.

A favorite Christmas song of mine speaks of our Savior's exchange of His riches for our poverty that we might have His riches. It is titled, "How should a King Come?":

"How should a king come?
Even a child knows the answer, of course:
In a coach of gold with a pure white horse,
In the beautiful city in the prime of the day,
And the trumpets should cry and the crowds make way!
And the flags fly high in the morning sun,
And the people all cheer for the sovereign one.
And everyone knows that's the way it is done.
That's the way a king should come.

"How should a king come?
Even a commoner understands—
He should come for his treasures and his houses and lands.
He should dine upon summer strawberries and milk,
And sleep upon bed-clothes of satin and silk.
And high on a hill his castle should glow
With the lights of the city like jewels below.
And everyone knows that's the way it is done.
That's the way a king should come.

"How did the King come?
On a star-filled night into Bethlehem rode
A weary woman and a worried man;
And the only sound in the coble-stone street

Was the shuffle and the ring of their donkey's feet.
And the King lay hid in a virgin's womb,
And there were no crowds to see Him come.
At last in a barn in a manger of hay
He came and God incarnate lay.
And everyone knows that's the way it was done.
That's the way our King did come."

The Apostle Paul put this wonderful truth this way: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

Have you been made rich through the poverty of Christ for your sake? Does this good news bring you exceedingly great joy? If you see the poverty of your sinful soul this morning, worship the King who died for your sins and arose again to make you rich in His forgiveness and eternal life.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching