Sermon-based Small Groups

_____ of _____

1stPresDowntown

# The Curious Travelers

## Matthew 2:1-4

**Week of September 27, 2026**

**This week's scripture:**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

### 1. The Nativity Set Problem

The sermon opened with the observation that we have domesticated the Magi—given them names, crowns, and a number that Matthew never actually provides—and placed them safely in our nativity sets. What other parts of the Gospel story have you domesticated in a similar way? What would it mean to encounter them as if for the first time?

The sermon identified a pattern running through the first two chapters of Matthew: outsiders, scandal-bearers, and the unexpected woven into the story of God's faithfulness—from Tamar and Rahab in the genealogy, to Joseph in the dark, to the Magi from the East. Had you noticed that pattern before? What does its repetition suggest about what Matthew most wants us to understand about Jesus and his Kingdom?

### 2. The Magi: Who They Are

The sermon emphasized three things about the Magi: they are Gentiles, they are astrologers (practitioners of something the Torah prohibits), and they have no covenant heritage. By every

religious measure, they should not be the first to worship. Yet they are. What does that say about who belongs in God's Kingdom—and who gets to decide?

The sermon described the Magi's posture as humble: no demands, no credentials, just gifts and bent knees. The sermon's reflection on faith like a child—and what a multigenerational church teaches us—pointed to how the simplest, least-credentialed faith is sometimes the most open. Where in your own life have you encountered that kind of uncomplicated, seeking faith in someone you didn't expect?

**3. Herod: The Insider's Response**

The sermon described Herod's failure precisely: "He has all the information. He has no worship." The Magi have almost no information and nothing but worship. That is a devastating contrast. In your own experience of faith, have you ever been in a Herod season —knowing the right answers, going through the religious motions, but without genuine seeking or wonder? What pulled you out of it, or what might?

**4. The Pattern Matthew Is Establishing**

The sermon traced the pattern across the first two chapters: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth in the genealogy; Joseph in the dark; the Magi from the East. Each time, God's faithfulness is carried by someone unexpected. Where have you seen God at work in your own community—God at work in and through people outside the church?

The sermon connected the Magi directly to Genesis 12: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The Magi are the first Gentile installment of that promise. How does it change your reading of this familiar Christmas story to see it as the fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham two thousand years earlier? What does that continuity tell you about the way God works in history?

**5. Love1st: Three Assumptions Challenged**

The sermon named three assumptions the Magi story challenges: that God is present among people like us, that power signals God's presence, and that the Holy Spirit is found only among the religious. Which of these three assumptions do you find most active in your own life—and most difficult to dislodge? What would it take to genuinely release it?

The three Love1st responses were: surrounding ourselves with outsiders, practicing radical humility, and recognizing grace among the Gentiles. Which of these feels most natural for you

personally—and which feels most like a stretch? Is there a specific person, neighborhood, or community in Coeur d'Alene where you sense God is already at work, and where Love1st might lead you?

**6. Living It Out**

The sermon closed with the contemplative question: "Who are the Magi in my life—the outsiders, the humble, the unexpected—through whom God might be bearing witness to his grace? And am I paying attention?" Take a moment together to sit with that question. Is there a specific person in your life right now who fits that description? What would it look like to pay closer attention to what God might be doing through them?