

**SERMON FOR THE DIOCESE OF BUNBURY: GEOFF CHADWICK:
4/1/2026:CHRISTMAS 2A
JESUS IS *THE ONE***

Matthew 2.1-12

¹ In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,
² 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.’
³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;
⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
⁵ They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:
⁶ “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
 are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
 who is to shepherd my people Israel.”’
⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.
⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’
⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.
¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.
¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

It has often been said that Matthew’s Gospel has a particular Jewish flavour. It seems that, Mtt, when writing the Gospel, had a Jewish/Christian audience in mind, and so enhanced the Jewish Character of Jesus.

Today we see quite a few of these enhancements.

By telling the story of the Magi visiting Jesus, Matt understands that the prophesy from Isaiah and the content of today’s psalm would be known to his listeners. *On hearing of Gold, Frankincense and tribute from “kings: of the east”*, they would have immediately identified the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah. On top of this, the town of Bethlehem is identified as the birthplace of the Messiah, and the Star may be a reference to the “Star of Jacob” mentioned in Numbers 25:17:

I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near—a star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the borderlands of Moab, and the territory of all the Shethites.(Num 24:17, NRSV)

Furthermore, Matthew emphasises “*Bethlehem*” by adding the words “*of Judea*” twice. Also those Jewish listeners who are “in the know”, would understand that Herod, wasn’t actually Jewish. This explains his fear because a new king of correct ancestry would be an absolute threat.

So, from the very beginning Matthew is telling the Jewish/Christian converts that they are on the right track. It seems that some church members were having doubts and needed to be reassured that Jesus is “the one”.

Matt give reassurance “*in spades!*” He’s telling them:

“*You are on the right track!*”

Then there’s a sudden twist to the story. Magi, Gentile magicians from the east, arrive to offer their gifts and worship Jesus. Suddenly, all Jewishness is forgotten and Gentiles get inserted into the story! The early church would have understood this perfectly. They were living it. Their church, which began with Jews is now being over-run with Gentiles! What does this mean?!

Well, the Magi story is the story of the early church in miniature. Gentiles bearing gold; Gentiles bearing frankincense; and Gentiles bearing myrrh; are coming to the little child of Bethlehem!

Mtt is reminding the church that all people, no matter what race, are welcome at the crib of Jesus. Christianity will have no racial barriers! The Gentiles are on the right track as well!

I don’t know about you, but every now and again I wonder if I am on the right track! I look at the people enjoying the beach, or watching the fourth day of a Test match on a Sunday morning (when there is one!), and think:

“I’ll have what they have!”

Sometimes I contemplate the violence that still persists on our world and wonder:

Is Jesus really the prince of peace?

I’m sure we all have these mini-crises of faith. At times we all wonder if Jesus is *the one!*

Then I get shaken out of these little crises and I remember the words of Peter in Jn 6:

Simon Peter answered [Jesus], “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68, NRSV).

I am reminded that Jesus is *the one.*

As I said earlier, Matthew reminds both Jewish and Gentile Christians that the little boy of

Bethlehem desires our most precious homage. Jesus is *the one!*

But this is not some simple delight in worshipping a cute little baby boy. No, it’s more than this, and the stark nature of the Magi’s gifts remind us. They point to later events in Jesus’ life that would have us shudder in grief, awe and wonder!

The old Carol “*We Three Kings*” expresses it most profoundly. Listen to the last four verses:

*2 Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.*

*3 Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshiping God on high.*

*4 Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]*

*5 Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies.* Author: John H. Hopkins (1857)

So when our little doubts arise, let them point us to Bethlehem again.

To see the baby Jesus for who he will become.

To see the baby Jesus for all he will endure.

And to see the baby Jesus in all his resurrected glory.

Jew or Gentile. It doesn't matter.

Jesus is *the one*.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.