



Arrival: Response
Message Notes, December 17, 2017
Matthew 2:1-12

In this Advent series, we have considered how we prepare for His arrival, doing so with faith-filled anticipation, and we have pondered the meaning of it all in the story of the shepherds. Today we reflect, through the story of the Magi, on the appropriate response. How shall we respond to this good news, this Savior born to us who is Christ the Lord?

If a famous person visited your home, what would your response be? It likely would depend on several factors: Your knowledge of them, your perception of them and your opinion of them.

In Matthew 2:1-12, we have four different responses to the arrival of the Christ child:

1. **Herod (the Great).** Known as such because of his great architectural achievements throughout Israel and also because of his success in maintaining a peaceful, stable state for 40 years between Jews and the occupying Romans. Plagued by depression and paranoia, he also was a vicious king, killing those who threatened his rule (including a wife and three sons).
 - Angry opposition – perhaps some may have this “Herod-type” posture towards Jesus, but it more likely is ...
 - A resistant response, in which we (like Herod) do not want to give up our right to rule our own lives.
2. **“... and all Jerusalem with him.”** The citizens of Jerusalem were not so much afraid of Jesus stealing away their power, but rather that He would change things, disrupting their familiar, comfortable lives – the affluent, peaceful conditions they knew under Herod’s stable accord with the Roman empire.
 - A reluctant response – we do not want Jesus to alter our familiar comforts.
3. **The Religious Leaders.** The Scribes and Pharisees were devoted scholars of the Law. They knew it and practiced it in meticulous detail. They knew all about the Messiah from the scriptures, but when Jesus arrived, they missed him!
 - A religious response. At its core, religion is man’s attempts to reach God – human work and effort supposedly making us right with our creator. The “arrival” of Jesus (and all God’s long preparations beforehand) reveal that God reaches us! We cannot work hard enough or be good enough to come to Him. Jesus’ coming (ultimately to pay for our sins) reveals the truth of grace – God doing *for* us what we can never do on our own.
4. **The Magi.** These pagan star-watchers were looking for truth; God met them on their own turf and lead them by a star to “the King of the Jews.” Here we find a right response to the arrival of Christ the Lord:
 - “We have come to worship him.”
 - They came a long distance in active, sacrificial response to the Lord’s revelation.
 - They gave gifts to honor him (not to leverage influence or favor). Unbeknownst to them, these gifts foreshadowed who Jesus would be King (gold), Priest (frankincense) and sacrificial Savior (myrrh, a burial spice).
 - They bowed to him in humble reverence.
 - Worship is the contrasting response to resistance, reluctance, and religion.



Reflection Questions

1. What is your perception of “the Christ child”? How do you think of Him?
2. How might your perception need adjustment?
3. How will you respond to Him – Resistance? Reluctance? Religion? Worship and surrender?
4. What is one tangible way, through these days of advent, that you can flesh out your response of worship and surrender to Him?