

Sunday 4th January 2026

Bible Readings

Ephesians 3:1-12 NRSV

[1] This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles- [2] for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, [3] and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, [4] a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. [5] In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: [6] that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [7] Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. [8] Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, [9] and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; [10] so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. [11] This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, [12] in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Matthew 2:1-12 NRSV

[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.

Questions

1. Why is Paul a prisoner in Ephesians 3:1?
2. What does Paul mean by the “mystery” revealed to him?
3. What does Ephesians 3:6 say about the position of Gentile believers?
4. Why does Paul describe himself as “the very least of all the saints” in verse 8?
5. What does Paul say is part of the Church’s purpose in Ephesians 3:10?
6. Who are the Magi in Matthew 2:1–12, and why is their presence important?
7. Why is King Herod disturbed by the birth of Jesus?
8. What is the significance of Bethlehem?
9. What is significant about the Magi’s gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh?
10. What is the main theological connection between Ephesians 3 and Matthew 2?

Extra

11. What does Paul’s teaching about the “mystery of Christ” tell us about God’s plan of salvation?
12. How does Matthew contrast the kingship of Jesus with the kingship of Herod?
13. What does Ephesians 3:10 mean when it says that God’s wisdom is made known “through the church”

Reflection

Drawn to Christ, Welcomed by God

Ephesians 3:1–12 and Matthew 2:1–12

The story of the Magi is familiar to us. They see a star, leave their homeland and begin a journey in search of the child who has been born “King of the Jews.” Yet when we read Matthew 2 alongside Ephesians 3, we discover something deeper. The journey of the Magi points towards an important truth: **God’s love and salvation in Jesus Christ are offered to all people.**

The Magi are outsiders. They are not part of Israel and do not share the religious background of the Jewish people. Yet they are drawn towards Jesus. When they eventually find him, they kneel before him and offer their gifts. Their journey reminds us that God can draw people towards

himself in unexpected ways. They did not begin with a complete understanding of Jesus. They simply responded to the light they had been given and let it lead them onward.

A striking contrast also emerges between the Magi and Herod. The Magi respond to Jesus with joy, worship and generosity. Herod responds with fear and insecurity. He sees Jesus as a threat to his power. This raises an important question for our own discipleship. When Christ challenges our priorities, do we respond like Herod by holding tightly to what we have, or like the Magi by opening our hands and offering ourselves to God?

In Ephesians 3, Paul helps us understand the wider significance of what Matthew begins to show through the Magi. Paul speaks about a great “mystery” that God has now revealed: the Gentiles are **“fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus.”**

In other words, there are no second-class Christians. God’s grace crosses the boundaries that human beings so easily create. People from different nations, cultures and backgrounds are brought together into one family through Christ. This has important consequences for the Church. Paul says that through the Church the wisdom of God should become known. The Church is therefore called not simply to preach reconciliation and welcome, but to live them. Our churches should be places where people can discover that they belong. Hospitality is not simply being friendly to people who are already like us. Christian hospitality means making room for the stranger, the newcomer and those whose experiences may be very different from our own.

The Magi travelled a long distance seeking Christ. Perhaps one challenge for us is to notice those who may quietly be searching today. Someone entering a church for the first time may have travelled their own long and difficult journey.

These readings therefore leave us with a simple but powerful message:

- **God draws people to Christ.**
- **God welcomes them through grace.**
- **And God calls us to make that welcome visible.**
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Like the Magi, we are invited to continue seeking Christ. Like Paul, we are called to recognise the wideness of God’s grace. And as the Church, we are called to become a community where the love and welcome of God can be experienced by all.

Questions for Personal Reflection

1. Like the Magi, where might God be inviting me to take another step on my journey of faith, even when I cannot yet see the whole way ahead?
2. Are there people I find difficult to welcome or understand, and how does Paul’s teaching that we are all “members of the same body” challenge me?
3. What practical thing could I do to help someone who is new, uncertain or searching experience something of God’s welcome and love?