

## “O Come Let Us Adore Him”

Date: January 5, 2020

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Matthew 2:1-12

Occasion: Epiphany Sunday

Themes: Adoration, worship, Epiphany

Many of us know the story of the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus so *well* that perhaps we fail to reflect on some of its deeper meaning.

The wise men were not Israelites; they were not Jews. Their appearance before Mary and the Christ Child proclaimed the fact that the Christ is for all persons everywhere, and for all time. According to tradition, the 12<sup>th</sup> day after Christmas, January 6, Jesus the Christ was made manifest to the *Gentiles*, those who were not Jewish.

There is an interesting word that appears in the story of the wise men. That word is the ancient word *homage*. The NIV translated that word as worship, but the old RSV translated it as *homage*. We use that word so seldom today that we have only a vague idea of what it means. Its significance is incredible, however.

First, homage is the total devotion and obedience one owes to an absolute lord and master. It goes far beyond courtesy or honor; it is a sign of complete commitment and dedication.

Second, homage is that which is given or extended to the lord and master, without any anticipation or expectation of a reward, a blessing, or a “return on their investment.” The wise men worshiped the infant because of who and what he was: the Lord and Master of the Universe, the Incarnate Son of the one true and living God.

And third, because homage represents *total* devotion, the wise men offered the Christ Child the very best they had, symbolized by the traditional gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. If we are to pay homage to

the Christ, then we too must be willing, no, *eager* to give him the very best of what we have and who we are.

In one of the most beloved Christmas carols of all time, “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” the refrain says: “O come let us adore him, o come let us adore him, o come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.” So far this morning we’ve talked about *paying homage*. But here is another word that describes what happened when the wise men met the baby Jesus. They *adored* him

But what does the word *adore* mean? Its Latin roots mean “to reverence and to honor.” But it’s a much stronger word than simply to honor. It comes closer the Latin word which we would translate at *venerate*.

If I were to say “I adore tacos,” or “I adore pizza,” that would sound ludicrous. I can like tacos or pizza, but it would be silly to say I adore them. Because to *adore* something is to go as far as we can go in worship and in praise. We can praise God and we can thank God and we can bless God. But when you *adore* God, you go as far as you can go. You take the ultimate step.

And the step you take is a step downward. The Bible says the magi “fell down and worshiped.” You might call adoration “full body” prayer. It is a way of physically lifting up God, by purposefully knocking yourself down a notch. Adoration means you’re on your knees and face.

Muslims pray this way. They are called to pray five times a day. And for the devout Muslim, prayer time is spent not only on their knees, but also in a flat-out prostration, arms and forehead on the floor, or at least on their prayer rug.

The mark of a pious praying Muslim can be seen on their forehead. It is called a “zabiba.” It is a prayer bump, a worn, calloused, raisin-ish mark where their head has met the floor five times a day, every day, year in and

year out. For the pious Muslim, a life of continually praising God leaves its mark – on the body and on the soul.

Catholics, Anglicans and Episcopalians still kneel during prayer or while taking communion. It is a movement in the direction of adoration. But it is still a perfectly-postured, straight-backed kneel. And of course, it is done on a nicely upholstered “kneeler.” It’s comfortable.

Protestants have a hard time showing adoration. I’m not sure why. Perhaps it’s because we like to feel that we are in charge of our religion and we don’t want other people telling us how it should be done. And perhaps that reveals some pride and arrogance on our part. Just something to think about.

What do dogs do with their bodies when they acknowledge the one who is in charge? How do they submit to the alpha dog in their pack? Their ears go back, their tail goes down and their head lowers. Sometimes they even get all the way down on their bellies. They use their whole body to communicate submission to the pack leader.

When the wise men came to the manger, they acknowledged the one true leader. They submitted to the one who was worthy to be praised and adored. They recognized the glory of God in the baby Jesus. And they prostrated themselves, to show their submission to Him.

How will you respond to the Christ Child? For those who see God in Christ, for those who recognize who Jesus is – the Son of God – the proper response is to pay him homage, to worship him, to glorify him, to adore him. May we each find our own way to show Christ that we adore him – not only in corporate worship, but all the days of our life.

Glory to God in the highest! May our lives be our worship, our continual adoration of God, in Jesus Christ. Amen? Amen!