

Last Week's Sermon Summary

『Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh』

Pastor Takaaki Inoue

Micah 5:1-3, Matthew 2:8-20

① [Christmas is full of travel stories]

When Jesus was born, a special star appeared in the sky. Astrologers who discovered this mysterious star learned that the Savior had been born and traveled from Persia and Arabia in the distant East. Persia was the ancient land where Israelites were held captive. Not all exiles returned to Jerusalem; many Jews remained in Persia, which likely contributed to the spread of the Jewish faith there. Though translated as "scholars," the original term is "Magi." They were scientists knowledgeable in philosophy, pharmacology, natural sciences, and astronomy. The story mentions three gifts, leading to the assumption of three men, though this is uncertain. Eventually, the three were given the names Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. Now, Christmas is full of stories about journeys. Joseph and Mary traveled to register, the astrologers traveled a long way guided by the star, and the shepherds journeyed through the fields. Our own lives are like journeys too. A will different from my own sent me on this journey. We began life's journey without knowing the destination. I didn't understand this when I was young, but after encountering Christ and studying the writings of the ancient Church Fathers, it became clear to me. St. Athanasius the Great of the fourth century said: "Why did God become man? To make man God." He is saying that Christ became man to give humanity the divine nature and make us immortal. We were born to encounter God. And the goal of life is to become like Christ through God's

love and the grace of the Holy Spirit. The destination of life is not on earth, but in heaven.

② [People who feel uneasy and joyless even at the Messiah's birth]

The astrologers came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (2:2) They likely assumed all Jerusalemites knew of the new king's birth. Yet both King Herod and the people of Jerusalem felt uneasy upon hearing this. Herod gathered the chief priests and scribes and inquired where the Messiah was to be born, learning it was in Bethlehem of Judea. So Herod sent the astrologers to Bethlehem. But only the Magi went to worship the new king; none of the others followed. This shows that neither the townspeople nor the priests nor the scholars welcomed the Messiah's birth—they weren't particularly pleased, or rather, they found it troublesome. Herod, the people of Jerusalem, the priests, and the teachers of the law were all living lives of falsehood, and they were quite content with it. The people had grown accustomed to serving a false king who provided them with benefits. If the true Master appeared, this way of life would collapse. If the real one appeared, the priests' own falsehood would be exposed. They hated the idea of changing the false lives they had built for themselves.

③ [Let us bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts] When the astrologers heard the king's words and set out, the star they had seen in the East appeared and went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the infant Jesus was. Seeing the star, they rejoiced greatly. ↗

Weekly Report

The United Church of Christ in Japan Miyakojima Church

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Escape to Egypt

《Escape to Egypt》

Miyakojima Church's 2025 Mission Policy

Motto : "Let's prepare for the construction of the church "

Scripture : "The toil of those who build houses is in vain, unless the Lord Himself builds them" (Psalm 127:1)

Goals for FY2024

- 1 Observe worship services every week and aim for an average of 27 people to attend services.
- 2 We invite one person to worship in one year.
- 3 We value the fellowship of believers.
- 4 Make concrete preparations for the construction of the church.