Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
2 Christmas
New Testament: Matthew 2:1-12

BACKGROUND
The world – that played Christmas carols all through the penitential season of Advent – has packed away the ornaments, taken down the Christmas trees, and has moved on to after Christmas sales. We gaze in wonder at the gift shimmering before us that we have barely unwrapped, let alone begun to understand. God among us – the Word made flesh. So we make the only response we can: we celebrate! We keep the greens in the church and sing the Christmas carols. We are being nurtured for the work that will be given us to do.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
Those in power are often threatened by those who might be even more powerful. So it was with King Herod. The wise often have to go home by a different way. So it was with the three kings. In this passage, Matthew invites us to see that the gift of baby Christ will find little acceptance among those he came to – and the gift given is for those who continue to share it. This passage provides the transition from gazing in wonder at the gift to empowering us to go out into the world and share it with those who have not yet noticed the gift.

THEME
Where is the Child

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the script for each person.

BEGINNING
Gather for coffee and conversation before beginning the class. Then move to a circle.

OPENING PRAYER
O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, page 214)

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THE STORY: MATTHEW 2:1-12

Invite three people to take the different parts (Narrator, King Herod, and People) to read from the script below.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Imagine you are King Herod, what are your fears about this new baby?
    - How can this baby be a rival or threat?
    - How difficult might it be for you to maintain order in this unruly province of the Roman Empire?
- Imagine you are the wise men.
    - How did you hear about this baby?
    - Why did bring the gifts you did gifts?
    - I wonder why you decided NOT to tell King Herod who you had found?
- Looking at this story from our own lives:
    - What stories can we share with each other of times we have "left for our own country by another road?"
    - Have any of us come to our faith on our own rather than following the faith we grew up with?
    - How does the road we choose to take put us at odds with those with whom we work or even with those who are our close friends?

GETTING CLOSURE

We begin the Season of Epiphany on January 6, when we will be called to reach out to those who do not yet know The Story and find ways to invite them in. We are called to BE Christians – reflections of the Light. How can we begin to think about doing this?

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer For Travelers (adapted)

O God, our heavenly Father, whose glory fills the whole creation, and whose presence we find wherever we go: Preserve those who travel, those who seek Christ, and those who stand up to unjust structures. Surround them with your loving care; protect them from every danger; and bring them in safety to their journey's end; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, page 831)

*Edited by **the Rev. Shannon Kelly***

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MATTHEW 2:1-12

The Visit of the Wise Men

Parts: Narrator, King Herod, People

Narrator: In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking,

Wise men: '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.'

Narrator: When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him,

People: 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "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." '

Narrator: Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

King Herod: '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.'

Narrator: 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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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