

# St Thomas Home Group Study

## Epiphany 2024

It may seem strange to be discussing the Christmas story in January, when most people have put their decorations away. Why do you think our culture moves on from Christmas so quickly?

### Read Matthew 2:1-12.

This is a story about two kings (not three!) – an established king and a new rival. Herod was a vicious king, ordering the killing of some of his own family as well as plenty of others (see Matthew 2:16). Jesus is introduced to us as a shepherd-king (v 6, quoting Micah 5:2).

1. How is Jesus being a 'shepherd-king' good news for our world, in contrast to the rule of people like Herod?
2. This is also a story about worship (v 2, 11). One might say that Herod worshipped power. Is that a fair description of him? How were Herod's actions influenced by his worship?
3. Everyone (even those who say, 'I'm not the religious sort') worship something or someone. What sort of things do your friends worship?
4. Some of the signs that people worship things other than God include: doing irrational things in pursuit of what they worship; sacrificing too much money or time in pursuit of them; sacrificing key relationships by putting priority on the object of worship. Can you think of examples of those things? What other traits would you add to the list?
5. If the magi thought that Jesus was worthy of such worship (time, effort, treasures, etc), what extra reasons do we have to worship him now?
6. Read the rest of chapter 2, and the poem by Malcolm Guite, which highlights the darker side of this story. How might this poem help us to interpret events in the world around us?



### Refugee (written for Epiphany 2012 by Malcolm Guite).

*Author's note:*

*Epiphany is over, the kings have set off home another way. But their arrival has triggered an appalling chain of events. Herod, then as now, thinks nothing of killing the innocent for political ends. The Christ-child is a refugee in the world he came to save. But God, who gives himself for us all also calls us all to give an account to him of how we have lived and loved in that world.*

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,  
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,  
But he is with a million displaced people  
On the long road of weariness and want.  
For even as we sing our final carol  
His family is up and on that road,  
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,  
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.  
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower  
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,  
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,  
And death squads spread their curse across the world.  
But every Herod dies, and comes alone  
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.