

Monday, December 19

Reading: Matthew 2:1-6 NRSV

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 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.' 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, '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."*

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| | Jesus | |
| King | above all | kings |
| Every knee | shall bow and | tongue surely |
| Confess that you | are the Lord. Your | presence frightens |

Those who clutch paper crowns and sit on plastic thrones. Your presence
Is destruction for the strong and comfort for the humble. The shepherds rejoice
As Herod trembles before the words of the prophet who declares your birthright.
Even the magi kneel in straw and submit to you. The usurpers are cast down from
High places. The gods who demand sacrifice are powerless before sacrificial love.
This King cannot be found carved in marble at the steps of the temple. His lips are
Wet, his skin is warm, his heart is pounding the blood that will save creation. He is
Christ the King, the living God who bears the weight of the world upon his head.

*...There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.*

T.S. Eliot, *Journey of the Magi*, Lines 36-43