

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Epiphany  
6 January 2012  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Wichita  
Matthew 2:1-12

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

I don't remember when it was for sure, probably 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade,  
but we had to read the book *The Outsiders*.<sup>1</sup>

It was a classic about teenage social life in Tulsa, set in 1965.  
There were the *Greasers* and the *Soc's*—  
what today might be more like the jocks and the preps,  
or Juggalos and White Caps.

The book was inspired by the author's friend, a Greaser,  
who was beat up by one of the "nice guy soc's".

In the end, it's all about being an outsider—  
being attacked, both with words and knives—  
no matter which group you fall in.

### **Magi as Outsiders**

Tonight's Gospel reading is also about outsiders.

We have the Magi, or wise men, coming from the East.  
They were most likely Persians coming from Babylon.  
Magi is where we get our *Magician*.

They were possibly sorcerers, astronomers, or more simply: scholars.

These *Magi* saw a star and came to Jerusalem.  
We're not quite sure how they knew what they knew—  
but they somehow do know that here in Jerusalem, where the star has led them,  
the King of the Jews was born:  
and they've "come to worship Him" (Mt 2:2).

The child born was "King of the Jews"—  
but they weren't Jews.  
They were outsiders, Gentiles.

### **You as Outsiders**

We're often in the same boat.  
Whether it's at school or work, with our friends or together at practice with our teammates,  
we know what it's like to be an outsider.  
We've heard an "inside joke" that we didn't understand.  
We've come to sit down for lunch and find all the seats taken.  
We've even visited churches where we just didn't seem to fit.

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<sup>1</sup> S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*. Viking Books, 1967.

There's something horribly painful about being an outsider.

Maybe it's the sense of rejection.

Maybe it's feeling dumb or inadequate or left out.

We hate being outsiders.

We hate feeling awkward and not part of the group.

We hate the loneliness.

### **Neighbors as Outsiders**

But others feel this way too.

Even though at times it seems like everyone has their lives all together,  
and you're the one who's a mess,  
that's just not the case.

Many of the people you see each day,  
whether it's one of the Starbucks employees,  
or that guy filling his car with gas next to yours,  
they've felt this loneliness too.

Some strangers have made their way to this church,  
and even though you all do a wonderful job of greeting and caring for our visitors,  
they can't help but to feel like outsiders.

Our world is a very lonely world—  
even though its filled with people.

### **Christ for All and All brought to Christ**

And that's what's so amazing about this story today.

There's something about the birth of this Jesus that draws even the outsiders in.  
Those strange and foreign Magi made their way across lands in order to meet this newborn king.

Something about this Jesus pulled them in.  
Something invited them out of their loneliness,  
out of their fear,  
out of their feeling dumb and rejected and inadequate.

When the star shone in the darkness of the sky,  
everything else faded away—  
even the darkness of their hearts and minds—  
all they could think of was this newborn king.

And the same goes for us today.

We all have different fears and different times of loneliness.

We all have different passions and interests and enjoyments.

We aren't here because we all think or talk the same way.

We aren't a special interest group or a social network—  
we're not a facebook page that each of us have "liked."

We are the Church, "warts and all!"

That is, we're those outsiders that our Lord has gathered to Himself.

We're the lost and awkward, the fearful and the inadequate.

We're the ones who don't quite fit in.

We're the lonely.

And while this is a place where others may help us out of our loneliness—  
that's not even why we're here.

We're here because the baby Jesus, the infant King has strangely and mysteriously drawn us here.

We may not have seen a star rising in the east,  
but we have had our Epiphany.

Some of us have been blessed with a life raised in this faith—  
others are much newer in their journey.

But we've all had our Epiphany,  
we've all had our lights come on,  
we've all received Jesus as He comes to us with His Holy Spirit and the love and  
mercy of the Father.

We've been baptized.

We've been forgiven.

We've been brought to Bethlehem (which means "House of Bread")  
in order to dine upon the Bread of Life Himself—Jesus Christ!

And it's here, in this church with these people in this communion,  
that all of us outsiders are brought in—brought into Christ and His crucifixion *for us*.

And inside, in this life of Christ,  
loneliness gives way to fellowship,  
depression gives way to joy,  
darkness gives way to light,  
and inadequacy gives way to being called the very son and daughter of God Himself!

Like the Magi of old, we are outsiders brought in by this infant king, the king who dies for us.  
And we've come to worship Him.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*