

Epiphany; January 11 & 12, 2026

Matthew 2:1-12

It was hidden in plain sight. Imagine a place so secret for over 30 years, its existence was known only to a select few. It was tucked away in plain sight, beneath one of America's most luxurious resorts. The Greenbrier Resort is built on 11,000 acres of land in the mountains of West Virginia in the small town of White Sulphur Springs. Today, it has 710 guest rooms, 20 restaurants and lounges, more than 55 indoor and outdoor activities and sports and 35 retail shops. 28 Presidents of the United States have stayed in the hotel. The last President to stay there was Dwight Eisenhower.



When we were on vacation after Christmas, we found ourselves making our way into West Virginia. Like we have done before, we were making it up day by day as we traveled. So, on one of the evenings in our hotel, I was trying to figure out what to do the next day. Then I saw it online – the Greenbrier Hotel – was only 15 minutes away. I did not know we were that close. I grabbed my phone and said to Nancy that we need to go to the Greenbrier Hotel tomorrow – not to stay but to go on a tour. She looked at me and said: *Why?* My response was: *to see the Bunker.* The next question was: *What are you talking about?* To see the top-secret bunker that is under it. I've read about this bunker before.

It's almost like something out of a spy novel. Tucked away in plain sight, beneath one of America's most luxurious resorts, lay a massive underground complex designed to house the entire U.S. Congress in the event of a national emergency or nuclear war. Construction began in the late 50's and completed in 1962. The bunker spans 112,000 square feet on two floors roughly about the size of two football fields. Its main entrance had a 25-ton blast door. It had its own powerplant, water treatment plant, cafeteria, auditorium, small TV studio and bunk beds for all the members of congress. It had to be fully stocked with fresh food and supplies to house about 1,000 people for a period of 60 days. It had to be ready to be activated at any time. For 30 years, thousands of people walked on or walked past a top-secret bunker that would be able to be a place where the government of the United States could continue to function if Washington D.C. would be destroyed. They had no idea that it was there. They had no idea what was behind those doors.



Then in 1992, a reporter for the Washington Post revealed the secret of the Greenbrier hotel to the world. The bunker built as America's last resort was revealed to the world. A bunker that characterized the fear that was part of our country during the cold war.

This morning, we celebrate Epiphany. We see another "secret" being revealed to the entire world. We see something much greater than a bunker to hide in. We see a Savior come to bring salvation to this world. Matthew begin the account of the Wise Men who came seeking. **"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."**

The Bunker at the Greenbrier resort showed the fear that was in our world at the time it was built. When these Magi came looking for the King of the Jews, it brought fear to the heart of King Herod and the city of Jerusalem. The king of the Jews, Herod, is in Jerusalem. The thing about Herod is, well, Herod does not play well with others. The Magi went to Jerusalem to ask about the new king. Matthew describes the fear that question brought to the people of Jerusalem. **"When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."**

It is easy to see why Herod would be troubled. This new king was a rival, competition, but why was all Jerusalem troubled? Because Herod killed people when he felt threatened. Herod had his wife and two of his own sons killed, because he was protecting his throne. So, if there is a new king coming, you do not talk to Herod about it. Foolish magi. But because they could never figure it out by themselves, God reveals Christ to them.

But the question from the Magi revealed the apathy found in the hearts of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They should have been looking for this coming Messiah. God had given his people the clues in the pages of the Old Testament. When Herod called the chief priests and teachers together, he asked where this King of Jews was to be born. After a short moment, they came back with the answer. Matthew records: **“When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”**” (Micah 5:2,4) The place that the Messiah was no secret at all. It was there in plain sight for all to read in the pages of the Old Testament. The Messiah had come to take away the apathy of the people. The Savior was revealed to all the world.

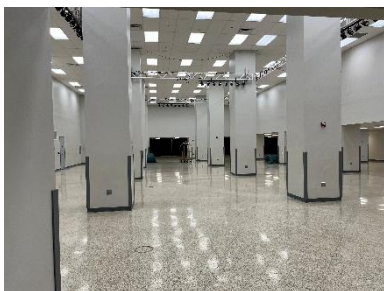
He had come to peace to the hearts of people. When Jesus came on Christmas Eve, God announced to the shepherds on the hillside of Bethlehem that the promise made to Abraham and the people of Israel had been fulfilled. That Savior was found wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. When the Wisemen came on Epiphany looking for that Savior, it was Christmas 2.0. They came to a house to find a toddler. This Savior came not just for the Jewish people, he came for all people of the world, even those who came from the East.

When the original readers of Matthew’s Gospel got to Chapter 2, verse 1, they would not have thought of *wise men*. They would have thought of pagan outsiders. They would have said: *“Magi! What are they doing here? Them? They’re outsiders.”* One might even expect their foolishness to disqualify the Magi from meeting the Christ. First, the Magi go to Jerusalem, the wrong city. But it is an easy mistake to make. They are looking for the one born **“king of the Jews,”** so they head to where the king of the Jews lives. The king of the Jews, Herod, is in Jerusalem.

The Magi did get a little help from the chief priests and scribes. They open God’s Word and reveal to the Magi how the Christ will be born in Bethlehem. Then they are off to find the Messiah. But before they head out, Herod says, *“Hey guys, when you find this new king, tell me where I can find him, so I can go worship him, too.”*

So, the Magi go. Fortunately, the star reappears to help them find their way. They finally stumble across the Christ child. The Magi offer their gifts and their worship to the child, but they are still a foolish mess, even after meeting the Christ. They get ready to go tell Herod where the child is, but God intervenes once again to set them straight. They are warned in a dream to go back a different way. Because they could never intuitively figure it out, God reveals Christ to them.

When the Magi began their journey, they didn’t know exactly where they were going when they left home. They didn’t know what would happen along the way. They didn’t know how their lives would be changed when they met Jesus. When we encounter the Christ, it changes our life. Whether we meet him through the water of baptism or the pages of Scripture, he changes us forever. God doesn’t seek out wise people. He makes people wise – trusting in him and his promises.



When the secret of the Greenbrier hotel was announced to the world in 1992, it would soon become a museum for history buffs. It would give a glimpse into the world of that day. It gives you a glimpse how something could be hidden in plain sight. But the Epiphany of the Christ-child is so much more. The Savior of this world is revealed to all.

God reveals Christ to us, and He sends us to reveal Christ to the world. He sends you to reveal Christ to your world. Speak the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection. You have heard it, now go tell it. God, who was faithful to create faith in you through the message is also able to create faith through you as the same message is shared.