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Matthew chapter number two. Matthew chapter number two. And when we have it as a body can we say amen? Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw a star when it rose and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them whether Christ was to be born. They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, And you, O Bethlehem, and the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

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For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem saying, go and search diligently for the child. And when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him. After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until they came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going to the house, they saw the child with Mary's mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

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And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way." And you can be seated. It is a blessing to stand before you this morning, and as I say this, I must confess that I'm not that excited holiday preacher. In fact, I began to consider a couple of weeks ago who I would ask to stand before you this morning to give the traditional Christmas sermon. However, this year I was met with something that I didn't anticipate, opposition within my household. My daughters began to question why I do this, and I proceeded to say that people shouldn't be coming out in order to hear what I'm saying. They should come out to hear what the Lord is saying.

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And then they responded to me, that's true, but has not the Lord called you to deliver a word in this local church? Mic dropped, conviction set in, and before you I now stand." I did understand their point. You see, the primary reason I struggle with delivering Christmas sermons has everything to do with speaking the truth in love. You know anything about me? My desire when I stand before you is to rightly divide the Word of God.

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So when it comes to Christmas, there's an aspect surrounding the celebration that can often be missed. And our opening text, I believe it actually speaks to this. So I'm going to ask you to please pray for me, as we trust the Holy Spirit to lead us as he does every Sunday morning, as he continues to lead us in rightly dividing the word of truth. In our opening text, Matthew records for us after the birth of Jesus. I know that that this morning our minds are focused on Jesus's birth. However, my focus this morning will be on the birth of Jesus as it relates to the wise men first thing I want to say is is We're used to saying the three wise men. When in actuality, we don't exactly know how many there were. Second, we often see them depicted on Christmas cards, you know, with some pretty cool turbans riding on a camel. And it's a great picture. We see them eventually kneeling at the manger where Jesus is laid.

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However, it's clear their arrival was sometime after Jesus's birth. One last thing, the wise men are not the shepherds we read about in Luke's gospel. Luke being the only other New Testament writer who speaks in detail about Jesus's birth, speaks about the shepherds in the field who received the

announcement by way of the angels. Luke chapter two, verse eight, and in the same region there were shepherds out of the field keeping watch over their flock by night.

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And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone all around them and they were filled with great fear and the angel said to them fear not for behold. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is the Christ who is Christ the Lord and this will be a sign for you? You will find a baby wrapped and swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Having dinner with some great friends, beloved friends last night and the conversation went to Linus when he quoted Luke 2 and the great Christmas Charlie Brown. If you haven't seen it, check it out.

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Now the reason why I want to point out some of these basic things is because sometimes in search of a Christmas message, pastors begin to over-spiritualize details in order to deliver a new and fresh Christmas story. However, we're going to stick with what the New Testament writers recorded as the Holy Spirit spoke through them. So I want you to keep those things in mind. Now here's what emerges from our text this morning. We're speaking about a time after Jesus' birth. We know Herod summoned the wise men and asked them when the star first appeared. We also know that when they first saw Jesus it was in a home. And finally, they didn't report Jesus' whereabouts back to Herod because in verse number 16 of Matthew 2, the scriptures record, then Herod when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise man became furious and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise man so by the time these men saw Jesus some time had clearly passed since his birth now these wise men or Magi as some of your Bibles may say, that is a Persian word meaning great.

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They were either from the priestly tribes of the Merds and the Persians or Babylonian wise men and priests. They weren't, however, kings. They were expert in things like astrology or interpretation of dreams and various other occult arts. These magi dwelt in the area of Babylon and continued there during the Medo Persian Empire so it was during the Babylonian Empire however they were influenced by Jews remember the Jews have been taken into captivity and they came into contact with one Jew that were pretty familiar with by the name of Daniel and in Daniel chapter number two if you remember and Daniel is interpreting a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 2.1 it says, in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams.

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His spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. The king then commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, which would be the Magi, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dream. Now if you're familiar with the account, he did in fact interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream and as a result of this we read in verse 48 of chapter 2 of Daniel then the king that gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief perfect over all the wise men of Babylon so let's put this together we know that these wise men were not Jews but Gentiles. They're traveling from the east, most likely Babylon, which was then later conquered by Persia, and they traveled to Jerusalem. So you're looking at about 800 miles. They then arrive in Jerusalem and they ask the question, where is he who has been born King of the Jews? By this time Jesus could have been two months or two years. Time has elapsed and these wise men they were seeking Jesus as they kept watch through the years concerning the prophecies as a result of Daniel's influence they were familiar with the prophecies concerning this coming Messiah and after a significant amount of time and expense they arrived in Jerusalem and began to inquire about he who was born King now Herod heard about this and immediately the scriptures say he became troubled. The reason is simple. He was king. So all of a sudden people walk around

talking about, hey where's the king? You're like, oh I'm the king. So you can imagine this began to stir some things up on the inside of him. He had been pronounced king by the Senate in Rome. So the question really began to trouble him and what's interesting is that Matthew said that it troubled all of Jerusalem well, this is the Holy City So so why would they be troubled and that word trouble means to be deeply agitated?

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And there were a lot of reasons why those in Jerusalem would be concerned one being Herod's reactions towards them and trying to determine what is going on now Herod immediately responds in verse 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born this is what he does he gathers the religious leaders the chief priests the scribes most of the scribes were Pharisees but not all Pharisees were scribes these were the theological men they were the interpreters of the law. So here he calls them all together and asked where is the Christ to be born? To which they reply Bethlehem of Judea. They didn't hesitate. In fact they're quoting prophecy given by Micah in chapter 5 verse 2, but you Beth, O Bethlehem Ephraim, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth from me one who is to be ruler of Israel whose coming forth is from old from ancient days Let's think about this for a minute He turns to him. He asked him a question They didn't immediately go back and start rolling out scrolls to try to figure out what he was talking about They immediately gave him an answer without hesitation Bethlehem They were familiar with the prophecy But disinterested in its fulfillment Those who sought or those who should have sought Jesus didn't Then we have these Magi They went on their way to see Jesus and not one scribe desired to go with them think about it for a second Herod's told of this prophecy this is the very thing that they studied they're all familiar with it no one had an interest to go and see if indeed the fulfillment of Michael's prophecy Micah's prophecy was coming true these These men had traveled over 800 miles all they had to travel was six and Yet None of them desired to go Reminds me of what Jesus said in John chapter 1 verse 11. He came to his own and His own people did not receive him See these men saw his star. I'm not going to spend time on the star I just want to point out that the they saw the divine sign and they followed it not a few blocks They took what they had come to know about the birth of Christ in following the sign found their way to Jerusalem After all if he's gonna be King where else would the king of the Jews be except in the holy city so you're living in Jerusalem and all of a sudden people are walking up to you and asking you the question where is he was born king of the Jews where is he was born king of the Jews where is he was born king of the Jews and you're trying to figure out what are they talking about except being Jews you would know what they were talking about it's interesting they're asking about the King how could they not be familiar with what was taking place? After all, are they not the Lord's people?

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I like what J.C. says about this section of Scripture. These verses teach us that it's not always those who have most religious privileges who give Christ the most honor. We might have thought that the scribes and Pharisees would have been the first to hasten to Bethlehem on the slightest rumor that the Savior was born, but it was not so. A few unknown strangers from a distant land were the first, except the shepherds that we already mentioned, spoken about in Luke. So I want you to get this picture. At this point, Israel wouldn't travel six miles to see the fulfillment of the prophecy. However, these Gentiles, Gentiles, had come to not only see, but to do that which we as children of God should desire to do. Worship. Listen as the wise men say in verse 2, For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him. We've studied this word many, many times throughout scripture.

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The word worship here represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence. It carries the idea of profound awe and respect. It's to prostrate oneself. It's to kiss the hand of one in token of reverence. It's to fall upon one's knees and touch the ground with one's forehead as an

expression of profound reverence. These men were not simply wishing upon a star. They came to worship Jesus. Now the debate as to whether this worship was spiritual, related to the knowledge of the Old Testament Scripture, or whether it was adoration given to a king, is not a debate for today. What I want to point out is that they worshipped. The word is not confusing. This is what they did, but here's what's a beauty It didn't begin when they saw Jesus Their worship was present when they marked out the prophecy check when they obediently began to follow the star the sign that was given check as They traveled some 800 miles not by plane not by train nor by car Beloved worship is of the heart and the minute they set their hearts to come and see the Christ. They were worshipping the Lord We need to make sure that we start to take note of what we see in this account the religious people who should have been eager to hear of Jesus's birth were indifferent and Those who should have been indifferent came to worship to the Gentiles It should have been nothing to them to Israel should have meant everything and so you get this picture those who should have been disinterested were clearly interested in what's going on. And those who should have been interested just saw it as, oh well, and turned the page. Just think about that as it relates to what we sometimes see in our day. AC continues, what a mournful picture this is of human nature. How often the same kind of thing may be seen among ourselves.

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How often the very persons who live nearest to the means of grace are those who neglect them most. There is only too much truth in the old proverb, the nearer the church, the further from God. Familiarity with sacred things has an awful tendency to make men despise them. There are many who from residence and convenience ought to be the first and foremost in the worship of God, and yet are always last. There are many who might well be expected to be last, who are always first. It's interesting. I spend a lot of time in a lot of different places, and, you know, that's all glory to God, because I'm not this great guy, it's just where the Lord leads me, but I often find that the people who were expected to be last are the people that I see Who are first?

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And the ones who expected to be first or expect or the ones that I see to be last We had a blessed opportunity to praise team of myself. We went down and we were able to serve somewhere Magic being in a room with 240 men 240 men and ain't no punks Imagine being in a room and all of a sudden you begin to sing Glory to God You begin to cry out and then you hear 240 men all Singing in praising and worshipping God Beloved I struggle with seeing that in this place It shouldn't be so you see most would say that's a place where they're last but can I tell you that's a place where they're first Sometimes we can take note and I pray that you're listening this morning to to what I'm saying because I When I am led to preach The scriptures always challenge me And I would be remiss if I did not then preach what was given to me to you So I want us to think about our lives how we live how we worship what we do We came here this morning And as you walk through here, here's what you don't see not because let me let me clear some things up I am NOT a Scrooge. Okay. All right, we clear it up for you. You don't see lights check You don't see 50 trees check check. You don't see ornaments check check check. I Still take gifts just so you know, I'm joking. I'm joking There's a reason why it's not because I think those things are going to send people to hell That people who do those things don't have a relationship with Jesus. That is not it at all. I Just refuse to shift my focus Because I have a job to do.

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That doesn't mean that whoever does those things is not focused on Jesus, but I know I'm called to stand here. And so in that comes great responsibility. And so I try as best as I can, according to the power at work on me, not to shift my view. And it's difficult because you want to sometimes you want to just slow down hey it's the season let me just just kind of take it easy and relax it's the reason why sometimes I'm not up here on a Christmas yet and the Spirit is always moving saying be consistent with who I called you to be in season and out of season and so I want you to think about what we're looking at at this point. We're the church and we're supposed to be closer to God, not further. I have

a question for you this morning.

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As we stand upon the eve upon which many have declared holy unto the Lord, what has your worship of he who would not only be born king of the Jews, but who thirty-three and a half years later will be declared King of Kings overall as he's crucified on a Roman cross. I began today by saying I struggle with speaking during this time because I know so many of you desire to truly worship Jesus, and I know it. However, we must ask ourselves, who are we worshipping?

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Are we like the scribes? Who immediately can speak? Oh this season is all about Jesus because when asked who they were looking for They immediately said Oh the Christ. He's supposed to be born in Bethlehem They had the answer like many of us. This is the reason don't leave Christ out keep Christ in Christmas He's the reason for the season we have all the right things to say. So did they. Except they had no desire to worship him. This time of the year airports are busy with many traveling to see family. And again, let me be clear, that's awesome. It's amazing and a blessing to be able to do such things I kept putting in all these disclaimers as I was writing and so I was like it put the disclaimer here and Disclaimer over here and so I got them worked all the way through so no one feels like I'm stepping on anybody's toes because I'm not It is a blessing to be able to have family to come out and to worship But are we willing?

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To make the same sacrifice of time, money, and effort to worship Jesus every day? We take time during Easter and Thanksgiving and birthdays and of course Christmas. We'll travel hundreds of miles to see loved ones, but we sometimes struggle just driving 20 minutes on a Tuesday night to pray. But even if I took that out, let's take out all midweek service, let's just focus on Sunday. Many people struggle to travel the 5, 10, or 20 miles just to worship on that day. Now, I can quote scripture that exhorts us to assemble as a church body, Hebrews 10 24, and let us consider how to stir one another to love in good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another in all the more as you see the day drawing near. I could illustrate this was the pattern of the early church upon its inception. Acts 2 46 and day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they received their food with glad and generous hearts praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved the scriptures are replete we know this just as the religious leaders knew whether Christ was to be born they knew now it's not recorded that they saw the star also but can I tell you something when the Magi when the wise man began to act upon the sign they had seen when they showed up That was their cue Yet still they didn't go out to worship We know what the scriptures teach But do we come to worship Jesus quoting the prophet Isaiah said in Matthew 15 8 this people honors me with their lips But their heart is far from me In vain do they worship me teaching us doctrines the commandments of men?

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As I was writing I stopped and I got and I walked away and my wife's like you okay And I said yeah, and she said what's bothering you? I said, because I hate seeing stuff like this on a day where we should be going fa la la la la la la la. And she was like, yeah, I know, but you always have a way of delivering where it all comes together. I said, it ain't looking promising right now. I said, so? And so she was like, well, just hang in there. I said, yeah, it's easy for you to say you're sitting there.

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I'm the dude that's up here. But she's amazing support. Thank you very much. And so I was listening to what she was saying. I kind of walked away. And I went and I sat back down. And I just said, OK, Lord, just please keep leading me. In our study of the book of Philippians, where we've been on Sunday mornings, the last month or so we've been camped out in the back part of chapter

number two. And if you recall, a huge focus has been humility. In Philippians 2, 3, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others. Now I didn't plan to be at this point in Paul's letter during this time of the year.

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It's simply where the Holy Spirit has led us. Coincidence? I think not. We're called to think of others over ourselves. However, there are those who hear others, and we think in terms of extended family or friends. But when I hear others, I think strangers and people I don't know. Now I'm not saying we can't do things with and for families this time of the year. However, we should concern ourselves with who we say we're honoring. That's what it comes back to. Who are we honoring in Luke chapter number 14 verse 12?

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He said also to the man who invited him when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. That's powerful. That's powerful and it really makes us take a step back and examine ourselves. Not because we're not believers, but because our aim is His holiness. So our desire is to continue to learn how to surrender. Think about it like this. After Herod learned where the Christ was to be born, here's what he did. He called for the wise men as we saw earlier and after getting an idea of when they first saw the star. In verse 8 he says and he sent them to Bethlehem saying go and search diligently for the child and when you found him bring me the word that I too may come and worship him. That sounds fantastic. Beloved, there is only one who knows truly the heart of men. We can discern and yet even then we can sometimes find that our desperately wicked hearts, our old nature, can get in the way. So when Herod called upon these wise men to go and diligently search for the Christ, we know through God's Word his desire wasn't worship. He desired to murder he who would be king. How ugly was his heart that he would lay claim to desiring to worship while all the while he was thinking about himself. Beloved, how ugly with the hearts of some be today and tomorrow thinking about self and family while proclaiming to worship Christ.

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So we can look at that and say that's horrible. That's not me. And I'm not saying that it is. I'm saying as Paul tells us in the letter to Corinthians, we are to examine ourselves. I can't see a person's heart. So I took another break as I was writing and my daughter was in the kitchen. And I walked downstairs and asked her a question. I prefaced the question with a lot of disclaimers too because it's the season of disclaimer right now. So I walked downstairs and she was making something to eat and I said, I know the wedding plans are in order and everything's in place so I'm not asking you to change anything. Let's put it out there from the word go. I have a question for you. Would you think it's strange if I were to have said to you instead of having your wedding at the venue that you chose that I take you down to a place that I go. Hold your wedding in a place where those who may not be able to come out would be able to sit and to bask in what God is doing in your life. And she said, Dad, I most definitely would have done that. And I said to her, you know, I think sometimes we forget who we should be inviting.

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And she turned to me and she said, actually, Ray and I haven't. We specifically chose people who would see this as praise to God. Not people we're close to. Not people that we are family or friends, but people that we knew Jesus would be seeing and that they would see Christ. And I was taken back by her response. Now, Lexi's not perfect.

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And all you gotta do is ask Ray and he'll tell you. He's finding out all day, every day. But I was surprised to see what God is continuing to do in her life over the past year and a half. I bring this up because I think that we have to guard against hypocrisy in our worship Herod's intentions were never to worship Jesus and I think many believers set out to worship him But we must be on guard against our common enemy the world Satan and our flesh You see sometimes we seek the Lord Jesus for all the wrong reasons in Herod's case his hypocrisy was made known as the wise men were warned not to go back And as a result, we know that he slaughtered all the male children two years and younger Now I'm not saying that that is our heart What I am saying is that Herod's focus wasn't Jesus.

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It was himself. He said he wanted to come and worship, but he really wanted to come for all the wrong reasons. How often do we focus on the Lord, not because we desire to come and worship and because we need something from him? There are many who display an interest in the Lord. Those who proclaim a desire to come and worship as they look to receive a gift rather than to give one. I pray a picture is starting to develop.

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Phone calls come in. Hey, what's your church doing in the community? I'd like to bring my kids out this season. Hey, what time is your Christmas Eve service? I love the candlelight and the carols. I Love candles candlelights carols myself Here it had no intention on worshiping Jesus and If many who make those phone calls are honest, neither do they? So perhaps well, how can you how can you say that? Oh, it's easy because the church meets every week not just in this season You don't have to wait for a special service the church serves weekly You don't have to wait in order to serve the community Delivering the gospel or caring for the poor and something we should always do Jesus said the poor you will always have with you So get this picture the Jews in Jerusalem the religious leaders in Jerusalem King Herod in the Holy City, they had every single reason to go to Bethlehem to go and worship the Christ, however, they Didn't and we see that indifference with people can eventually show itself to be cold and calculating in the heart. Can I tell you something? When it comes to the birth of Christ, you get two reactions.

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Worship as a result of the Spirit's leading, or indifference as a result of our flesh and our heart and heart. The wise men understood Isaiah 55, 6. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. This does not contradict Isaiah when he penned, no one seeks after God. And here's why. Verse nine, back in Matthew two, after listening to the king, they went on their way and behold, the star that they had seen when it rose, went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. But the star that started this journey They were seeking But only as the Lord was drawing them and here's what's also interesting to me They didn't know You sit this way they get there and they're looking for the king and this is how they get their answer through the Word of God You see Herod goes and asks the scribes they go to the Word of God and they come back and give the answer Can I tell you that's what we always get the answer It's going to the Word of God even Herod in his wickedness It was still the Word of God that was directing those who were seeking the Christ Now, how did they know this was his star? How did they identify it in the first place?

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The truth is we don't know and the Scriptures do not tell us. Nevertheless, the star directed them to the light of men. The Jews had the light, shining forth from God's word. But you remember what Jesus said in John 5 39, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. They had light and knowledge of Christ, but they refused to call upon him when he was near away. That's what blows my mind. Six miles away. Yet the Gentiles came to know where he was because they were seeking him. Listen, there are many

stars shining today. I said stars as in preachers and teachers who created quite the following for themselves. Those who like Herod desire the worship that belongs to the Lord. But I pray this message is waking us up. What does it truly mean to seek after and worship Jesus? The star that guided the wise men was divine. The stars that many follow today are not. Yeah, they preach the Word like those Paul said back in Philippians 1, they preach out a selfish ambition. They love promoting the love of self and your interests first, our interests first.

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However, these stars, these men are not shining as lights in a crooked generation. Like Herod who said, I desire to come and worship, they point the way but have no intention of seeking Christ, let alone worshiping him. I love what Spurgeon says, the star that leads to Christ must always be going to Christ. Men are far better drawn by example than driven by exhortation. People can preach it but they don't live it. I turn on the TV, I listen to, I hear some really really good sermons from a lot of different people who don't live what they preach. Think about what he said. Men are far better drawn by example than driven by exhortation. Let me ask you a question. Have you been that example right now?

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Are you being an example of those who have not only seen the light of Christ, but are falling to our knees in worship, diligently seeking the light? Just as the Lord provided the wise men with a star as a guide, and this is through his amazing love He always provides a guide for those who earnestly seek him Do you remember the words he spoke to the Prophet Jeremiah's who was speaking to the Jews who were in exile? He said in Jeremiah 29 13 because we always read Jeremiah. What is it?

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I know the plans the Lord has for you Jeremiah 29 10. I think it is 11 Jeremiah 29 13 you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Listen, the Lord was calling them to Him, just as He's calling us to Him. As children of God, have you been seeking Him with all your heart? Just take a moment and think about it. Lord, willingness year is coming to an end. He's been drawing you. If you're a believer in here, He's in you.

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Have you been seeking Him with all your heart? Who you've been living for this past year? When you look, do you find that I don't really it's hard for me to ascertain a moment where Jesus wasn't front and center. It's impressive that it's so hard to live that way. 100% it is. But yet he empowers us to do it. There are many things in life that are difficult. Marriage isn't always easy. So bless union, but it's not always easy. You have two people who are imperfect being brought together and the Lord is pruning you through the other Raising children isn't always easy It becomes difficult The moment they start to get of some size all of a sudden now they got the whole world figured out and they want you To listen to them But yet we can't wait to be married but yet we can't wait to have children Many of the things that we go through aren't things that are easy But there are things that we desire Are you being that example Of what it means to truly seek after the Lord I'm going to bring this to its close.

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These Gentile wise men, in their seeking and worship of Christ, which to me is beyond words, they rejoiced over the star because they knew where it was leading, to He who is King of the Jews. Do you rejoice when you go to the Word. God's light shines in our heart because you know where it's leading. For some, maybe to a relationship with Christ. For others, growing in your love of Christ. Matthew 2 10 says, When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned



in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

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Remember I said that one of the major themes of Philippians was joy, but this joy is experienced through true humility. The joy of these men overflowed as they came into the presence of the King. When Jesus is our central focus, he fills us with a joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. glory. Another thing to note they fell down not to worship Mary but to worship Jesus. Make sure you see the distinction. Now let me say again. We can talk another day about how they viewed Jesus as a temporal King. Was a prophesied Messiah. Here's what I do know their worship continued. The love of God never ceases to leave me speechless, because the first worshippers of our Lord wasn't his people, it's Gentiles.

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Sometimes we don't stop to think about that. They traveled a long way to come see him. Once again, I'll say the people that we think should be last are the ones who are first. They came. And they fell down to worship him. Can I ask you a question? When was the last time?

0:42:15

You laid prostrate before the lord. When was the last time I said that if they went to their knees. They're all the way out their forehead is to the ground and they're worshipping the Lord. Can I ask you. When was the last time you worshipped him like that. When was the last time you found yourself laid out before the Lord. I know that, I said, well yeah, but all that isn't necessary. The worship is about the position of the heart. However, when Jarius sought Jesus to heal his daughter, Mark 5:22 says, then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius by name, and seeing him he fell at his feet. How about when the Syrophenician woman desired Jesus to heal her daughter, Mark 7:24. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. How about when one of the ten lepers returned after being healed in Luke 17:15. Then one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back praising God with a loud voice and he fell on his face at Jesus feet giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Or how about Peter?

0:43:39

After he doubted when the Lord told him to go back out and cast his net and it was then that he caught a net full of fish and in Luke 5:8 when Simon Peter saw it he fell down to Jesus' knees saying, depart from me for I'm a sinful man, O Lord. Or how about Mary? After her brother Lazarus had died and before Jesus resurrected him, she came to him when he finally showed up in John 11:32 and when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him she fell at his feet saying to him Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died. Beloved they didn't have to bow down. It reflected their heart posture when someone says all that isn't necessary to me something makes me really think about where you're at because can I tell you something you're gonna spend eternity crying out holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty. You're worried about whether or not you can bow down to Him now? If you can't bow to Him now, you're fooling yourself if you think you're going to bow to Him then. There has to be this moment where, what does it feel like to be laid out before God? That doesn't mean you have to walk in the middle of the mall and just lay out and just start praying so people know that you're a believer. If you do it, let me know because I want to come check it out.

0:44:48

And so that pastor will right there be like yeah Got you Listen here's the picture right Even in the privacy of your own home when did you just stressed out before God? Felt like he was too holy to even look upon To just lay down and complete surrender See when you're laid out like that, you feel vulnerable. It doesn't feel comfortable. I don't know what's going on around me. Beloved, that's complete trust.

0:45:19

I tell you something. Maybe just maybe. The Lord carries us into next year, you'll find yourself laid out for before. I pray that you don't see that as being beneath you But you actually see it as being the posture of your heart because I tell you something We look at a person says a genuinely nice person based on what they do is why we say it Can't tell you something when you're laid out before God it shows the posture of your heart in ways You never thought imaginable and when someone says it's not necessary. No, it wasn't necessary for the Syrophenician woman. It wasn't there sir for gyrus It wasn't necessary for the leopard wasn't necessary for Peter. It wasn't necessary for Mary Yet they revered him anyway Spurgeon says those who look for Jesus will see him Those who truly see him will worship him and those who worship him will consecrate their substance to him Love it. There's this progression of worship.

0:46:28

It goes beyond just the things that we attend to in terms of one to another. It's this place that we go to with God. If I couldn't worship Him, I wouldn't be able to stand before you. It's only because and in the worship of Him that I'm able to find myself to stand up here, to be able to deliver a word to you I can't do it in worshiping him empowers me apart from worshiping him I can't do anything we say well apart from Christ right well how can you be in Christ without worshiping him I think sometimes you think you can have one without the other listen I know some great speakers I could talk a lot when I was younger. I was a great speaker and it got me in a lot of trouble And then God harnessed his gift and it gave me the gift that mattered can you hear me Can you listen can you be quiet and can you worship me Beloved they were led to him as they sought him which is an act of worship they found him and continued to worship they fell to their knees most likely faced down and then the scriptures of court then then opening their treasures the continuation the gifts weren't secondary they were a part of their worship in in conjunction with Love a giving is always an act of worship We're not called to browbeat people into giving. There's a reason why you don't see an offering plate There's a reason why you don't hear me talk about offering. There's a reason why I don't discuss it and never have Because you're giving should be an act of worship to God. It has nothing to do with me You should want to give to God. I know people say the catchphrases, you know, you can't beat God's giving God don't always give you back what you want But can I tell you something when you give you're worshiping him It's a continuation It's what we do. Don't make it secondary, please And I know we have a tendency to do that. You know, we write it off like a bill. Can I tell you something? Can you pray about it? I don't care if you click a button, we live in that generation. Can you pray before you click it? Can you just not say give it and forget it? It's an act of worship. God doesn't want something that doesn't come from your heart. He doesn't want you to write it down like it's a bill that you're checking off. See, what happens is we can stay in that place. Oh I give I never really said look the last time I really thought about what I give Well says let a man gives as he prospers As you continue to increase You should continue to give hold it. I didn't say to the church. I said to give to Christ We don't take enough time to think about that giving because it becomes an automatic when worship becomes an automatic It's a concern Want you to think about this what did Paul say in Acts 20 33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel You yourselves know that these hands minister to my necessities and those who are with me in all things I've shown you that by working harder this way We must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive. This is a posture of the heart. That word gift is that which is given and stresses the gratuitous character of the gift voluntarily given by one without compensation from another. It's an act of worship and devotion. And I love the word treasure. It speaks to store. It's like a safe. And so he said they opened up their treasures. When was the last time you opened up your treasure chest to give to God? When was the last time you stopped and you thought, I'm going to open up my treasures and give to him? Listen, during this time of the year, we don't think twice about giving gifts to loved ones. We go back about 10 years or so, I don't know how long it's been, 20? My wife's looking at me, never. And so when it came to Christmas gifts, there was always this big argument between her, because it was always, you know, how many gifts go to the kids? How many gifts go to nieces and nephews? How many gifts go to extended family? And so little as in a

grown man, but nevertheless, she has two little brothers. And so she acts as mom. And so we would argue every year. We would get everybody everything. And then she would come to me and she'd say, well, what about them? And so we got them something. Well, yeah, but that's just like one gift. And I was like, well, yeah, how many, how many do they want? And she was like, well, it's just, it's just, it's just one gift I said yeah one gift for your brothers like I don't know what the problem is with that well yeah but can't we can't we do a little bit more and I was like well we could well I want to it's so and so she was like well I don't understand why I said well they're your brothers they're not your kids and so she was like well they're like kids like kids and kids alright and so we literally would go back and forth most of the time I would wind up giving in This is back when we were in the heyday of buying everything under the Sun and to be honest with you I wasn't even serving the Lord at that time. And so we've come a long way from those days But I can remember the money that I would spend and I would sit back and I would think about it afterwards And I would ask myself today, have I given to the Lord like that?

0:52:32

Beloved, if you're sitting in here this morning, can I tell you something? It's not too late. I was talking to Alicia, was leading worship up here with Pyrus this morning, and I was talking to her and I said, hey, I'm struggling. And she said, why? I said, with preaching. Okay, we could have just played that. And so she said, Pastor Will, just do what the Lord leads you to do. And I listened to her and she said because here's one thing for sure no matter what you say, it's not too late It's not too late If you are a believer in here today, we're like the wise men We've entered into the house and we can worship Jesus without reservation We can give to the Lord a gift You want to reach into that treasury? Let me tell you what he'd love to have your body as a living sacrifice Romans 12 1 holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service?

0:53:51

When no else you could give reach into that treasure chest forgive somebody Reach into that treasure chest walk in love towards somebody. Reach into that chest and surrender, asking the Lord to increase your trust in Him and thus your faith. These are all amazing gifts. They're acts of worship to our Savior and Lord. Psalms 95 6 says this, O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. For the wise men, it was a long journey. And it culminated, it culminated in them being face to face with He, who would not only be King, but He, who would be Lord of Lords.

0:55:05

So we stand here today with an opportunity. It's Christmas Eve. I'm not asking you to change any of your plans But maybe the Lord might be moving up on your heart to add to them To do something that you might not have thought about before you came in maybe someone popped in your mind Maybe something popped in your mind an act an action. I don't know what it is But you have the ability right now. It's not Christmas Day. I Very rarely have a problem preaching sermons like this after his past it's always when it's right on the eve of. Last night at that same dinner, I heard a man say something. Luke, not the gospel of Luke, but he said it's about making the effort to just make the changes To be intentional about adding the things that we need to add in order to do the things that we need to do And I was listening to him as he spoke And while there are other things that I won't share there That stood out to me because you have the opportunity to do that right now What will you do different?

0:56:18

Because if you leave here and just say, that was a great sermon, then you didn't hear a word I said. Because I wasn't the one speaking. Let us do something different. Can we worship? So we're going to close. I want to close a little bit different. Give me five more minutes and we'll all be on our way home. But I'm going to ask you first to stand with me. And I'm going to ask if Pastor Ralph wouldn't mind coming forward.

0:56:58

If you're in here and you don't have a relationship with Christ because we've been talking about these wise men. Let me tell you who they were going to seek. The risen Lord. He was born so that he could die, so that we could live. The same wood that was carved, the same wood that was fashioned into a manger is the same wood that was fashioned into a cross of crucifixion. Isn't it interesting how both death and life met at the manger as he was born and inherits sought his life and yet at the cross both death and life as he was crucified so we could live. These aren't coincidences. Jesus desires that we come to him and I recognize that we're in centers in need of amazing grace and if you're in here today because someone invited you because families here but I'm hearing about this Jesus that everyone's coming to adore then I want to pray with you this morning and I want those of you who are here to just be in prayer for the person that's next to you you don't have to turn to him but can we be in prayer that as a church not upon this rock church big C in the world that worship erupts and that we are going and coming to those who don't know him and that we are being changed so if you are here and you don't know him I want to invite you to come forward it's hard possible to take that step remember I said a lot of things hard in life just let us pray with you. We can't save you, but we can pray for you.

0:58:55

And so as Lysandra sings, I want you to listen to the words. And if you desire just for that prayer, just for a moment, we stand here ready to pray for you. Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel Until the Son of God appears. Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Israel. O come, O come, thou Lord of might, Who to thy tribes on Sinai's height In ancient times, disdainful love In cloud and majesty and awe Rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel Thy name from Satan's tyranny, From depths of hell thy people save, Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer Our spirits by thine advent here night and as dark shadows put to flight rejoice rejoice Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

1:02:51

O come, thou Key of David, come and open wide our heavenly home. Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel. O come, thou wisdom from on high, And order all things far and nigh To us the path of knowledge show And cause us in her ways to go Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel Come, desired creations, bind In wonder hearts of all mankind Bid thou our sad division cease and be thyself a king of peace.

1:05:09

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel to the. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Father, we thank you for this morning and we rejoice. And Father, our hearts are filled with joy. We thank you, Lord, that we are not alone and we thank you, Lord, that we can see your love for us before the foundations of the world. Jew, Gentile, male, female, bond, free, all one in Christ Jesus. And the picture, Father, of you receiving worship father That's the picture of us coming to you. We thank you for calling us. We thank you for drawing us and most importantly Thank you for saving us And so we pray that as we leave here today father We are rejoicing with yet another opportunity to magnify you to worship you to lay prostrate before you Oh God, not just in our mind, but father in our actions and in our deeds. We father want to be that example.

1:06:53

We want to be those who are not only worshiping you father, but doing so in spirit and in truth. Oh God. So we thank you that upon this Eve father in which many will gather together as family. This even which many will look to tomorrow morning. The father we don't forget the others in our lives father. The others that you've called us to esteem greater than ourselves. The others who might be alone right now, the others who might be in need of a touch, the others who might be in need of a prayer, the others who are in need of love. Father, make us mindful of the others while we're mindful

of the things that are going on in our own lives. It's not as though we can enjoy what you've done, but father, let us richly enjoy it by imitating your son, our savior, Lord God, and King.

1:07:33

And so we together, father, as your church, thank you. We magnify you and we will not leave the same way we came in. We give you all the glory. We give you all the honor and we give you all the praise for your son Emmanuel. God with us. And this is the prayer of your church in the name of the Lord Jesus somebody before you leave here.

Transcribed with Cockatoo