

Wiseman

Series: The Glory of Christmas

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

December 19, 2021

Welcome again to worship today and the fourth Sunday of Advent. Our series is “The Glory of Christmas”, and I believe it was shot here in Ohio.

We have seen Mary, the 31 week pregnant former soccer mom, who discovered God’s plans for her, though disruptive for what she had for her life, helped her to remember to rely on the Good Shepherd. We met Joseph, who was radically underqualified for what he is about to do, which tells us that God uses all of us for His glory. And of course, method actor Shepherd who didn’t bathe for a month who realized he was the keeper of the most important message that’s ever been kept.

Today, we meet the wiseman.

VIDEO: WISEMAN

C.S. Lewis once said, “The only thing that can dwell in the presence of God is humility.” With all the things that Tony the “Wiseman” may or may not know as depicted in the video, it seems the one thing he did know was his place in the story. Knowing one’s place in the Christmas story is another aspect worth consideration when it comes to the glory of Christmas.

The central character in the story of Christmas is named within the season that is cherished by so many: Christ. Jesus Christ is the centerpiece that the entire story is about and revolves around based upon what we read in the Gospels. Christmas is not about the Wiseman, nor is it about you or me. While so many times we may inadvertently, or perhaps intentionally, live as if the story of life revolves around our self as the main character, the glory of Christmas is that we are given an annual opportunity to reframe Who truly is central to the story of life: Jesus was born as the Savior of the world. God chose to become incarnate in the form of a fully human child and moved into the neighborhood of planet Earth as our way home to a right relationship with Him.

Wisdom is knowing enough to know that we are not meant to be center stage in the story of Christmas. The centerpiece of every Nativity scene is the Christ-child in the manger. Mary, Joseph, Shepherds and Wiseman...even livestock and perhaps a hovering angel at times, all find themselves surrounding Who is in the center. Nobody has a Nativity scene displayed where the wisemen take the focal point. That is because the glory of the story is who is at the center, rather than who is on the periphery.

All the people and pieces surround Jesus, including the wisemen. And wise people understand this dynamic. Only a fool would think the glory of Christmas is about someone other than Christ. Christmas is not about Santa or Scrooge or what the Grinch tried to steal. Those stories may be fun to enjoy throughout the season. However, Christmas always has first and foremost been about Jesus as the central meaning.

The Wisemen demonstrate a glorious move that we would be well-served to remember concerning their place, and ours, in the story of Christmas. Matthew’s gospel reminds us in the second chapter.

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 his star when it rose and have come to 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 it came to rest over the place where the child was. 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.¹

These Wisemen stopped what they were doing in their everyday lives. They prioritized their time, energy, and efforts to move from what they were concentrated on to focusing on reorienting their lives in close proximity to Jesus. They moved toward worshiping Jesus and offering Him gifts in the process.

These actions and choices by the Wisemen demonstrate and remind us of a glorious truth about Christmas: the story is about someone else. It is not about them. It is not about us. It is about Him. It is about Jesus. What a treasure to be reminded that our place in the story is not at the center of it all.

And what a blessing to remember that part of the glory of Christmas is about giving gifts rather than receiving them.

The Wisemen are recorded as bowing down before Jesus in worship and giving gifts to Him of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It was not the other way around. The story of Christmas is not about somebody else besides Jesus getting gifts. Rather, it is about Jesus being honored, recognized, and worshiped with gifts...really good gifts. The Wisemen did not regift some cheap white elephant throwaway party prize that came home with them from last week's office party. No, they brought their best to the newborn King because they knew their place in the story...and His.

Yes, the Wisemen likely had all kinds of head knowledge and esteemed recognition for their comprehension on a variety of subjects from their day and time. Our “Wiseman” named Tony in the video was known to have all kinds of useless bits of information as well. However, at the end of the day, Tony, just the like the actual wisemen from Scripture, knew his place in the story was one where serving Jesus rather than being served was more in line with the true glory of the story of Christmas.

Sometimes we get that out of order in our lives throughout the rest of the year. We think we deserve to be served. We get frustrated when things do not go our way. We become impatient and even entitled to better service or more focus on our needs, whatever the situation or scenario might be. However, Christmas helps us stop and remember that to have the same approach and attitude to the story of our life as Jesus does in His is to see others as more important than ourselves in a humble and genuine manner.

The Apostle Paul would later write about this focus in the letter to the Philippian Christ-followers while drawing from the life of Jesus.

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 interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted

¹ Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 (ESV)

him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.²

It is a beautiful thing to remember that the Wisemen did at the start of Jesus' life as a newborn, what Paul says all people will do in time: bow before Him. No matter what we believe about Jesus right now or where we think we should be situated in the story of our life, in time every person will find himself or herself on their knees, facedown, worshiping before King Jesus. When we realize the wise thing to do is what the Wisemen did that first Christmas, bow early and often as a way to recognize who is at the center of this story, it will go well for us both now and in eternity.

As we make our way through this Christmas season, may we look for opportunities to humble ourselves and move off center stage and onto the side or background while helping others get closer to see the One at the center of the story. May we serve Jesus by serving others. May we find ourselves on our knees and offering gifts rather than desiring others to bow their lives, desires, and time to serve us and offer us things we really do not need.

Yes, part of the glory of Christmas is that it helps us remember our place in the story. We can be reminded in a fresh way this season how the most famous Bible verse of all time goes.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.³

May we remember that God "gave his only Son;" the story of Christmas and the truth of this verse does not say that God gave you or me to the world. It is a glorious thing when we realize we never were intended to be God's gift to the world. It takes all the pressure off to perform or try to be someone we never were intended to be in God's eyes.

A wise person would never be so foolish to presume he, she, you or I ever were meant to be center stage of God's story. Only a fool would take the spotlight meant for someone else. Relax, and choose to be in the background where we were meant to be in this story from the start. Consequently, may we enjoy the glory of Christmas as we find ourselves to the side and not the center. May we find ourselves on bended knee before the King as we offer gifts of worship and lives of service to Him. May we be people who consistently seek Jesus and do our best to point others to Him as we serve and share what we do know: Jesus is the center of the story. Let's live that out for His glory as we tell His story this Christmas.

² Philippians 2:3-11 (ESV)

³ John 3:16 (ESV)