

12-18-22

**Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11; Philippians 2:3-11; John 3:16**

Who is the center of Christmas for you? Do our mouths say one thing, and our actions show another? A better way to connect this challenge is, who is at the center of your nativity scene?

C.S. Lewis once said, "The only thing that can dwell in the presence of God is humility."

The Christmas story screams humility. Whether it was Mary and Joseph who were unqualified to be the parents of the Son of God. Or the shepherds being given the most important message to share in all of history. Or the wisemen, gentiles led by Jesus' star, to be witnesses of God's most important gift to mankind. The very birthplace of Jesus, Bethlehem, in a manger, most likely in pole barn or cave, displays 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 wisemen, shepherds, Mary, Joseph or even you and 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 what and 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. 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.

**Read Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11.**

Lessons from the wisemen to apply to our lives:

**1. Their Priorities Changed.**

- 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 near Jesus. They moved toward worshiping Jesus and offering Him gifts in the process.
- These Wisemen, "Magi" (possibly Arabic or Asian) astrologers who studied the stars and sought to understand the times. They were Gentiles who had been especially called of God to come and pay homage to the newborn King.

- These Wisemen, Gentiles, pagans, idolaters, see Jesus' star and God reveals to them that if they follow it, they will come to the King of the Jews.
- Once the truth of whom Jesus is they drop everything to worship Him. They leave their busy lives behind to search for the Son of God.
- As Christmas approaches where is your focus? Is it: "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." Or is it something else?
- We can choose what our focus is, what the center of the nativity scene is in our life. We can focus on what we don't have or what we want to have. The regrets of another year coming to an end. We can choose to focus on the losses we have had at this time of the year. Today marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Kim's loss of her mom. December 20<sup>th</sup> marks the one year of my mom passing. Although those are painful memories, we must decide, are we going to let those dates reframe God's plan in our minds.
- Christmas is all about Jesus and although we can lose focus, we must refocus ourselves on who it is about and why.
- We all could learn from the wise men, once we become born-again our priorities must change, and we must be purposeful about it.

## 2. Proper Christmas Attitude.

- 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.
- Their primary reason to come to see the baby was what? (Answer found in **Matthew 2:2**) **"...come to worship him."**
- Our Christmas attitude must be to worship Him, Jesus. I don't want to be a fun sucker but we, Christians have gotten carried away with Santa, an Elf, decorations, movies, presents and the "spirit" of Christmas. If you are good enough, you will get spoiled with gifts, that most don't even need. Again, I am not hating on "Christmas fun" but I am cautioning us that from reading the room, we are getting more and more carried away with it.
- The Wisemen's attitude was to worship the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Unworthy, undeserving Gentile idolaters.... seeking to worship.
- What if instead of buying hundreds to thousands of dollars, that many of us don't have, what if we spent Christmas season celebrating Jesus and bringing gifts to Him, like Christmas was meant to be.
- Some of you have tuned me out already. But some of you are right there with me. What would that look like? I have some ideas, but I am certainly open to prayer and discussion regarding it.
- But preacher Christmas is about getting and spending time with the family. Is it? Cause, that is not what I see when I read the Christmas story. I see how God sent is perfect Son into a troubled world to save mankind and restore mankind back to God. I see God giving a gift of salvation to man and asking for our hearts of worship.
- These Magi, Gentiles had the proper Christmas attitude, will we? Or will we continue to part of the Christmas grind?

### **3. They Gave Their Best.**

- **Read Matthew 2:9-11.**

- When they found Jesus, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy!
- The Wisemen are recorded as giving gifts to Him of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- The story of Christmas is not about somebody else besides Jesus getting gifts. It is about Jesus being honored, recognized, and worshiped with gifts...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.
- The Wisemen likely had all kinds of head knowledge and esteemed recognition for their knowledge on a variety of subjects from their day and time. The "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 like the actual wisemen from Scripture, knew his place in the story, 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.

**3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philipians 2:3-11**

### **4. They Showed Proper Positioning.**

- **"...fell down and worshipped Him." (v. 11)**

- 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.
- 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.
- May we remember to share the real glory of Christmas.

**John 3:16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

### **Conclusion**

May we remember that God **“gave His only begotten 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. We should choose to be in the background where we were meant to be in this story from the start.

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.