

Sermon Based Discussion

Sermon Title: Good News for the Wise Men

Sermon Series: The Good News of Advent

Sermon Text: Matthew 2:1-12

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What is a present you are/were hoping to get for Christmas? Did you get it or not?
2. What was your view of Christmas when you were a child? What is it now? What do you think it will be like in 20 years?

INTO THE BIBLE

Read Matthew 2:1-12

3. Why is the foreign background of the magi ("wise men") significant to this story?
4. The priests and scribes cite an Old Testament passage about Bethlehem as the birthplace of the messiah. Why is it significant to know that the birth (and death) of Jesus as part of God's plan all along way back in the Old Testament?
5. What might have been Herod's reasons for calling the magi secretly (v.7)?
6. What does this story suggest about God's plan and power to orchestrate all these events?

GOING DEEPER (Sharing/Application)

7. Which characters in this story can you relate more to:
 - the wise men **looking** for a Jesus they may **not fully understand**,
 - or the priests and scribes who have **knowledge** about Jesus, but maybe **aren't as excited** about him,
 - or Herod, who is **troubled** by this talk about Jesus?
8. What do you think about the quote Enoch mentioned in the sermon about being troubled by Christmas before you can rejoice over Christmas:

That's the message of Christmas: God reconciled the world to himself through Christ, man's sin has alienated him from God, and man's reconciliation with God is possible only through faith in Christ...Christmas is disturbing. Don't get me wrong—Christmas should be a wonderful celebration. Properly understood, the message of Christmas confronts before it comforts, it disturbs before it delights. Only those who have been profoundly disturbed to the point of deep repentance are able to receive the tidings of comfort, peace, and joy that Christmas proclaims. (William H. Smith)

9. The magi probably didn't realize Jesus would have to die on the cross for our sins, yet they still gave their prized treasures. What is something that you sense God is calling you to perhaps offer Christ?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel..." (Matthew 2:6, citing Micah 2:5; ESV)