

What Made the Wise Men Wise? GFC – 12/22/19

My sermon today is titled... “What Made The Wise Men Wise?”

Someone once asked the question “What would have happened if there had been **Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men?”**

If the wise men had been women, things would have been much **much better.**

First of all, they would have **asked directions immediately upon starting their trip.**

They also would have **arrived on time so they could help clean the stable and deliver the baby.**

Also, they would have brought much more **practical gifts like a casserole for the family to eat and cute little outfits that baby Jesus could have worn on his trip home.**

But oh well, I’m sure God had a **purpose for choosing wise men (not wise women)**

So, here’s what the Bible says about these wise men in Matthew 2:1-12

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 have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.’”

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where

the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

The question I would like to ask this morning is **what makes these wise men so wise?**

And how **can we be just as wise today?**

You see, **not everyone in this story was wise!**

****King Herod** was not wise.**

In fact, King Herod was afraid and angry about the truth that there was a King greater than he was.

Herod represents **political power.**

He wanted to maintain power and He didn't want anyone more powerful than him gaining any power.

Political power can lead to prestige and wealth; but many times, it leads to hypocrisy and lies.

The **chief priests and the scribes were not wise.**

They were supposed to be experts in the law, but they completely missed out on the birth of Jesus.

This shows that **knowledge about God is not enough.**

There must be **faith in God.**

All this really makes me stop and think... in what ways are we like these unwise rulers:

Are we **angry and afraid that others might have more power than we do?**

Are we **seeking power, prestige and wealth more than seeking God?**

Are we **hypocritical and do we lie when it benefits us?**

Are we **legalistic? - More concerned about knowledge and rules than relationship.**

You see the **opposite of being wise is being foolish.**

Here are some other **antonyms of being wise:**

careless, insensitive, reckless, thoughtless and unreasonable.

So, if you want to know if you are wise like the wise men...you can ask yourself if any of these characteristics describe you.

Because you can't be all these things and be wise at the same time.

When I was in my late 30's I made some very unwise choices.

I had been serving the Lord since I was about 15 and I was very dedicated to doing what was right.

I prayed, I went to church, I read my bible, I told others about Jesus, I was a good mother, I homeschooled my kids, I was a good wife, I submitted to Joe – well that might be a stretch...let's say I repented for not submitting to Joe.

Anyway, I did everything I thought I was supposed to do to the best of my ability.

And as a result, I believed that God would do what I thought He should do for me.

I remember thinking – I've done my part now God will do His part.

Which in my foolishness meant He would do things my way.

So, when everything that could go wrong in my life went wrong... I began to question God.

I felt like He had let me down and I became angry with God.

So, I made some really unwise choices.

You see wisdom is the quality that keeps you from getting into situations where you need it.

First, I quit talking to God.

Then I quit listening to God.

I quit worshiping God.

I started listening to secular radio and hanging out with unbelievers.

Basically, I shut God out of my life.

Eventually I realized what I was doing.

So, I started trying to talk to God again.

I started seeking Him, but I just couldn't find my way back.

It was scary because I wasn't sure I would ever be close to God again.

Fortunately, I had **three very wise friends** who could tell I was struggling. (For the sake of this sermon I'll call them the **3 wise women**).

They reached out to me and prayed for me.
After that I began to get close to God again.
It took **three wise women** to rescue me from my foolishness.

We'll it really took **three wise women and one wise guy**.

Pastor Joe is the wisest person I know.

We've been married 45 years and I can honestly tell you that in all those years I've never seen Him blame God, question God or turn away from God.

Sure, he's struggled to understand things sometimes, but He's never wavered in His understanding of who God is.

That is wisdom.

And I learned something from this experience.

I learned that no matter how hard life is, no matter what happens, God is always good, and faithful and just, and all knowing, and all powerful, and always wise and **the last person you want to question or blame or turn on is God.**

I learned that when **life falls apart**...God is still good.

When others **hurt or betray me**...God is still good.

When **things don't go the way I think they should**...God is still good.

God is always good, and I've learned to trust Him in the difficult times.

Since this experience I've **not questioned** God's character.

Psalm 34:8 says... **Taste and see that the Lord is good.**

He is also wise.

Romans 16:27 says... **To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.**

Webster's 1828 dictionary **defines wise** as:

Having knowledge; hence, having the power of discerning and judging correctly, or discriminating between what is true and what is false; between what is fit and proper, and what is improper.

With this in mind - let's look at **three reasons the wise men were wise.**

1. The Wise Men Were Wise Because They Sought Jesus

I was unwise when I quit seeking Jesus, but the **wise men sought Him**. So, what was it that caused these wise men to seek “the King of the Jews”?

They didn’t have all the facts when they started.

They had **just enough knowledge** to know they needed to search.

They not only believed in God’s existence, but they believed He cared about mankind.

This conviction came from what the wise men **saw in creation**.

Psalm 19:1-4 says:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

God’s **power and creative handiwork** are demonstrated in the heavens.

As the wise men observed the heavens their attention was drawn to one particular star.

They didn’t have a **zillion stars** to guide them. They had **just one**.

They knew it was **from God**, so they followed that star.

You see, God gave them just **enough light** to go forward in their search for Jesus.

Wise men follow the light that they have!

You see, God won’t give you more light or more truth, until you **walk in the light** and the truth that you have.

Sometimes God gives us just enough light to take the **next step**.

By the way, the wise men had their first glimpse of God while doing their **ordinary work**.

God works through the circumstances of our life and quite often those circumstances involve our place of employment. For instance, it happened to:

- Moses – while tending sheep.
- Gideon – while harvesting wheat

- Peter – while cleaning nets after a night of fishing
- Matthew – while at a table collecting taxes
- Wise Men – in their study of the stars

God can speak **to us** in and through our work.

If God has spoken to you, please know that you don't need to know all the answers – you can **follow the light** you have, and God will lead you.

Not only did these wise men recognize God at work, they also recognized **God in the Word** that was revealed to them.

At the time when these wise men were looking for Jesus, they only had the **Old Testament**.

We have no way of knowing just how much of the Word they had.

But one thing we know – they had to have **enough knowledge** of scripture to know that a **“Messiah” was coming**.

They didn't have all the answers, but they had enough to give their souls a **hunger for more** and to begin their search.

You and I have so much **more information** than these men did.

We have the complete inerrant, infallible Word of God.

God wants to speak to you, if you're **willing to listen**.

So **where are you** in your search?

If you don't know Jesus Christ as your savior, please do yourself a favor and seek out the truth about Jesus.

Get in this book – and read.

Ask God to show Himself to you.

When's the last time you **read your Bible through**?

I'm about to finish doing just that.

And I LOVE it.

The wise men were also wise **because of the way they searched for Jesus**.

They were committed and determined in their search.

It is possible these men may have traveled **up to 1000 miles**.

This wasn't a whim of the moment –

They would see their search through to the end.

Are you **determined** like that in your spiritual search?
 Many of us give up the second **things get difficult**.

The wise men **did not quit** because their journey was long and difficult.
 Yet some of us have trouble getting out of bed on Sunday morning.

The wise men's **journey was costly**.
 They had to provide food and lodging for their entire trip.
 Yet for some of us – any cost in any way is too much.

Did the wise men ever **grow tired**? I'm sure they did. But they kept going.

Did the wise men ever **get discouraged** and feel like quitting?
 I'm sure they did, but they kept going.

Did the wise men ever **get ridiculed** for following a star to who knows where? I'm sure they did, but they kept going.

Some of us have **very little commitment** and we give up way too easy.
 Especially when it comes to the things of God – which by the way – are **way more important** than anything else in life.

Some people have much more commitment to things much less important.

Wise people **seek the Lord** with all their heart.

As someone once said, there is a **God-shaped void** in all of us that only God can fill.

Everyone needs God and if they don't find Him, they spend their entire lives empty and **looking** for something to satisfy that emptiness.

They look for **love** in all the wrong places and all the wrong people.

They look for **pleasure** in all the wrong substances.

They look for **joy** in all the wrong things.

They look for **fulfillment** in all the wrong activities.

They look for **purpose** in all the wrong goals.

2 Timothy 3:7 describes them as:

always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

That's because **they refuse** to acknowledge that Jesus is the truth.

That's why Proverbs 9:10 says:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

True wisdom **starts with God.**

2. The Wise Men Were Wise Because They Were Worshippers

The wise men said they were seeking Jesus so that **they could worship Him.** Verse 10-11 says...

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Notice it says here that they rejoiced with **exceedingly great joy.**

This rejoicing was not small or hidden – it was **big and obvious.**

They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

They didn't just rejoice.

They didn't just rejoice with joy.

They didn't just rejoice with great joy.

They rejoiced **with exceedingly great joy.**

The Greek word here for great is **mega.**

It means **high, large, loud and mighty!**

Wise people rejoice in the Lord with mega praise – high praise – loud and mighty praise!

When the wise men finally found the Christ, the Bible says they **fell down and worshipped him.**

You see there's a time for singing – shouting – dancing

But there's a time when the **only appropriate response** is to fall at His feet and worship Him.

The Greek word here for worship is proskuneo (pros-koo-neh'-o);

Meaning to **prostrate yourself in reverence, to adore to kiss.**

When they fell down and worshipped, they gave Him gifts.

The **essence of worship is giving.**

Wise men give to the Lord.

And the wise men did not give **cheap trinkets** – the Bible says they gave **their treasure!**

They gave to Jesus **gold, frankincense and myrrh.**

Wise people do not give God **cheap leftovers** – they give Him **costly treasure!**

God deserves the **very best** that we can bring!

3. The Wise Men Were Wise Because They Heard God and Obeyed

These men were wise because they **heard God and obeyed** despite what others said or did.

They were wise enough to **not listen to King Herod's** words when he told them that he would also come and worship Jesus.

Fine sounding words but they came out of a heart of jealousy and hypocrisy.

These wise men would be no part of it.

They were **on a mission** and would not be sidetracked.

God led these men away from the trap that was set for them; and God will **direct you** in your search, if you'll ask Him.

Will you do as the wise men of old?

Will you seek Him?

Will you worship Him and give to Him?

Will you hear His voice and obey?

To do this requires that you **overcome your unbelief** through faith in Christ.

The wise men also **encountered unbelief.**

There was **no faith** in Jerusalem, **no joy** that Christ was born.

No one believed. No one cared.

You would think that the wise men would have been **discouraged** by all this unbelief, but they weren't.

You and I are the **modern-day Magi**, overcoming obstacle after obstacle, because we believe that Christ is worth it.

Obstacles will always be a part of worshiping Christ, but we won't let them discourage us.

Because there, in the arms of Mary, is **God in the flesh**, who gave His life, so that we could have eternal life.