OPEN YOUR TREASURE

This Christmas, let us honour God with our worship and our treasure.

KEY POINTS

- Jesus' birth came at a particularly busy time of year. Many, including Joseph and Mary, were traveling to their ancestral hometowns to report for the mandated census.
- Ancient prophecies had faded to the back of the public consciousness. But God, never being without a witness, got the attention of foreign Magi (aka wise men), whose identity and exact origins aren't clear.
- A star appeared, leading them first to Jerusalem. There, they reasonably expected to find people acknowledging and worshiping this new-born King.
- After all, it was Israelite prophets who prophesied His birth (see Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2).
- However, in Jerusalem they found that neither Herod (the Roman-appointed king), nor the Jewish leaders had any clue of this new King they were asking to see.
- Instead, Herod asked the wise men to report back once they'd located this "king" (Jesus). His plan? To kill Him.
- The star they had followed to Jerusalem appeared to them again, leading them to not just to Bethlehem, but to the very house where the young Jesus was.

The Worship

- When the wise men found Jesus, "… they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).
- We don't read that they gave such honour to King Herod. But before this babe they assumed a posture of worship befitting the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- The King who, being rich, became poor that we might become rich through His poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9). The King who was born to die so that we might live.
- From time to time in a church service you'll see people seemingly unaffected by anything or anyone around them, abandoned in worship, presenting an unrestricted, unrelenting offering of worship to God at the "altar".
- You could be the Queen of England – they are stepping past you. Only Jesus inspires and deserves this kind of worship. You can give Him that kind of worship today!

The Gifts

- **Gold** was especially prized and used as a medium of exchange. In both the Tabernacle and the Temple, gold was used plentifully and was associated with worship.
- We give much 'gold' at Christmas time – to purchase gifts, travel and entertainment.
- When we give to God we express, "Jesus, you are my treasure. I esteem you more highly than my greatest possessions." We give, not because He needs money, but to show we value Him more than we value our money
- Let us be intentional about sharing our 'gold', and our table, with those who have less, giving cheerfully to others and to the work of God.

KEY SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-2, 11

- **Frankincense** is the second gift mentioned. It was used as medicine and as perfume, but its most important use was in worship.
- It is highly fragrant when burned, and was therefore burned as "a sweet savour" to the Lord. Because of its association with sacrifices, frankincense represents prayer and worship pleasing to God. We can offer frankincense with a commitment to:
  i) A Godly Lifestyle: 1 Peter 1:15-16, 2 Peter 3:11, Romans 12:1; and
  ii) Prayer: Psalm 141:2, Revelation 5:8
- **Myrrh** was an aromatic gum produced from a thorny tree that grew along the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East and Africa, and could have the same "weight worth" as gold!
- It was used in perfumes and incense and as an embalming compound for the dead. It had medicinal properties and could be mixed with wine for ingestion.
  While frankincense was known for its sweetness, myrrh was known for its bitterness, thus its association with death. [Jesus received a gift of myrrh again at the end of his life. See Mark 15:22-23, John 19:39-40.]
- Christmas may be a miserable time for you. You may feel betrayed, overlooked, forsaken. Drained and overwhelmed. You may feel like you have absolutely nothing to offer.
- But God desires your worship even when you are wounded. Your Myrrh is a most valuable treasure to Him! (See Psalm 51:17.)

A New Way Forward

- Matthew 2:12 (NKJV) says, "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.
- Don't go back the way you came! Don't return to an agenda that chokes out the reason for the season. Change course. Make time for worship. **Open your treasures!**

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. How much focus do you put on "finding Jesus" (e.g. all your heart)?
2. "When the wise men found Jesus they bowed down and worshiped Him." What does your response/worship look like?
3. Consider and follow through on what you will offer as your "gifts" to Jesus/others this year.

Prayer Time

"Lord, what can I give You? I give you my heart."

L.G. ice-Breaker: Think about the things you have received from God this Christmas and give Him thanks.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

 (Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS