

Intro. Have you ever watched a movie in a series of movies & felt like you were missing out on something because you hadn't watched the previous ones? People trying to watch "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" without seeing episodes 3 or 4 don't get as much out of it. The same is true for "Harry Potter" movies, "Lord of the Rings" & others. If you are new to this series or missed out on one or more, we are looking at "The Humility & Beauty of Bethlehem." We began a couple of weeks ago on the anointing of King David, a man who came from humble beginnings as a shepherd boy. Last week we considered the prophecy of the Messiah, spoken of 700 BC by Micah. Last night we noticed the witness of the birth of King Jesus by the shepherds in Luke. Now, we conclude the series on "The Humility & Beauty of Bethlehem—In Worshiping the King" from Matthew 2.

Theme: Worshiping Christ

Background: Most scholars agree Matthew wrote primarily for a Jewish audience, because he often quotes the OT & shows its fulfillment in Jesus as the Messiah.

- Because OT Law was specific about worshiping the Lord alone, Matthew makes clear in the opening chapter that Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us." Thus, it is right to worship Jesus as King & that's what these wise men do.

➤ **Let's see what 3 expressions of genuine worship looks like in our desire to worship Jesus the King:**

1. One expression of genuine worship is seeking Jesus the King (2:1-2)

- The wise men came a great distance, probably 800+ miles over several weeks to find the One born "King of the Jews" so they could worship Him

Illus: Do you remember what your life was like when you really sought Jesus? I mean you couldn't eat or sleep or think of anything else until Jesus changed your life through forgiveness & peace & hope, do you remember that? We shouldn't lose that sense of wonder & excitement at seeking Jesus to worship Him

- Real worship aims to overcome obstacles to worship Jesus—travel a great distance, fight off temptations to stay in bed or make as much money as you can by working weekends or putting family before Jesus on the Lord's Day
- One way Christians often demonstrate seeking Jesus the King is through regular, daily Bible reading—seeking to understand God's Word more clearly & how it centers on the glory of God through the Person of Jesus Christ (you can sign up to read through the Bible in 2017 & use whatever plan you want, though we provide the **Come. Drink. Live!** 365 day plan)

2. One expression of genuine worship is perseverance through discipline in serving Jesus the King (2:3-8, 12)

- Not only did these wise men travel great distances in seeking Jesus, but they didn't give up. They made their way to Jerusalem & inquired of the birthplace of the King of the Jews
- When the religious leaders provided Herod with the answer—Bethlehem—a tiny town just 6 miles from Jerusalem, they renewed their commitment to see this King so they could worship Him
- Contrast that kind of commitment & perseverance shown by the wise men as opposed to that shown by Herod—they traveled hundreds of miles & persevered but Herod wouldn't even travel 6 miles by himself to see this Jesus

Illus: Recently, I read through the book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* by Don Whitney with a group of men I mentor. Whitney reminds us that the goal of the Christian

life is Christlikeness or godliness & the means to Christlikeness is through spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, worship, stewardship, meditation, witnessing & more—these should never be viewed as a way to make us right with God or as a drudgery kind of duty, but a delightful duty because God uses them to conform us into the image of His Son!

3. One expression of genuine worship is giving generously to Jesus the King (2:9-11)

- When the wise men found Jesus, they worshiped Him. One of their expressions of worship came in the giving of costly gifts—gold, frankincense & myrrh
 - Gold—a precious metal valued higher than all others
 - Frankincense—a resinous gum from trees in Arabia, was used medicinally
 - Myrrh—also a resinous gum used medicinally (when mixed with wine, as a narcotic, Mark 15:23; for prolonging a body’s decay in burial, John 19:39) but also mixed to make the holy anointing oil for the Tabernacle/Temple (Exodus: 30:23-25)
- Each of these gifts was valuable commodities in the ancient world & spoken of as valuable in the latter days (see Isaiah 60:1-7; Revelation 18:11-13). They were among gifts the “best money could buy.” Because of his wealth, a king doesn’t typically need such gifts, but these gifts were acceptable to the Lord, because they were the best these wise men could offer & because Jesus’ earthly family was poor
- These gifts were probably used to finance the family’s move to Egypt (in escaping King Herod) & eventually Nazareth

Illus: When you read about giving in the Bible, it has much to do in teaching us about living.

One of the clearest passages on this truth is found in 2 Corinthians 8 where Paul commends the Macedonian Christians for their generous giving to support the Jews in Jerusalem & they did this by first giving themselves to the Lord & then to Paul’s work (v. 5)—when you give yourself first to the Lord, giving generously to His work is not a difficult thing but a joyful act

Conc. You’ve heard the expression: standing idly in a garage doesn’t make you a car. Along the same lines, visiting inside a Hall of Fame—baseball, basketball, rock & roll—doesn’t mean you are “in” the Hall of Fame, right? What do I mean by all this? You can claim to seek Jesus, serve Jesus or give to Jesus & still not be right with Him. Doing any of these things & more doesn’t make you right with God. Only repentance from sin & trust in Christ causes God to declare you right with Him. Then, when you have a right relationship with Jesus, you want to worship Him & seek Him & serve Him & give to Him & more.