

The Three Wise Men - Matthew 2:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:12-17 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

It's Christmas time, the moratorium on not playing carols has been lifted. And of course, one of the classics is *We Three Kings*, putting the story of the magi's visit to the infant and their gifts to Joseph and Mary to melody. The combination of the song along with the myriads of nativity sets, children's Bibles, pageants, and even movies has left most of us believing that there were three wise men, no more and no less. The reality is that the story told in Matthew 2 does not tell us how many of these men arrived. Tradition actually says there were 12, but this too is nothing more than a guess. What we do have is three gifts given by these foreign visitors who recognized the divine royal birth when the nation of Israel ignored the angels and the star. So, is it a big deal to sing the song and to picture three wise guys? Well, no, and yes.

The number of wise men is just one of multiple facts we have filled in to the story of Jesus' birth to tell the story. Some would argue that we should not create images of Jesus or act out the story. I am not among those. Yet our challenge is that we really do need to separate fact from fiction and make sure the foundation of our faith rests on what is actually revealed in Scripture and not on details we have filled in to tell the story. But this points us to the larger issue, the one that is actually the underlying issue for all of the sermons in this series. We are often vulnerable to not just this type of misunderstanding of Scripture, but also to false ideas, doctrines, and teachers who use bits and phrases from the Bible and yet deceive. The problem is our biblically illiteracy which leaves us vulnerable to be swayed by teaching that sounds right but is actually from the lips of that Serpent of Old.

In fact, the first words out of Satan's mouth were, "Did God really say...?" He then misquotes and mischaracterizes God in Genesis 3. Eve seeks to correct the devil, but she too misquotes what God really said and then from a deceived yet willing heart chooses rebellion against the True God to satisfy her own desire to be a god. This is how Satan works in our lives. He does not come at us with crazy beliefs that are out of left field. Rather, he slightly twists even the things God has said just so much that it appeals to our sinful hearts and leads us to embrace ideas about God and self that just slightly off center. But that trajectory over a life time leaves us miles and miles from knowing God through Jesus.

Timothy was Paul's son in the faith. Paul was instrumental in his discipleship, and furthermore had trained him to be a church leader and pastor. At the time of the two letters we call 1 & 2 Timothy this young man was an Elder at the church in Ephesus. Paul shares two dangers that are present for those who follow Jesus. First, following Christ is difficult, and those who truly want to be godly will be persecuted. So here comes Satan reminding us that God's people ought to prosper and have an easy life. Second, Paul warns Timothy of imposters who will preach, even using the Scriptures, but they are deceived and will deceive so many. So, what is the solution to this?

Simple, Paul tells Timothy to continue his deep dive into the sacred writings that he was taught from birth. These are not just any sacred writings from any religion, Paul is speaking specifically of what we call the Old Testament, the Scriptures they had at that time. Furthermore, Paul reminds Timothy that all Scripture is breathed out by God, inspired by the One True and Living God. When I pick up the Bible and read it, I am not just reading one of many human books about God and spirituality. What we read and preach is actually the very Word of God, the direct revelation of Himself to humanity. God, who is transcendent and beyond our capability to know chose to condescend Himself and make Himself known to frail and unworthy humanity. God spoke through the words and writings of people He inspired, and the very words they wrote perfectly communicated God's nature, purpose, and

glory to us. So the solution for this entire series is that we need to grow in our understanding of the Bible. We should come prepared to hear from Him through the Word preached on Sunday morning. Nothing special about Mike or the other Elders who stand on our stage, we are just men. But we seek to be faithful to preach Christ from all of the Scriptures, and when we do the very Word of God goes out to His people. Furthermore, we should find ways to study the Bible with others and for ourselves. This includes passing the Scriptures on to our children. And we should read the Bible, consistency, passionately, and purposefully. There are myriads of Bible reading plans a person can use. But I know the very best one for you. It is the one you actually do. It is through the Word preached, studied, and read that God drives the truth of Himself into our being so we will know when an imposter comes along. So join me, lets be people of the Book.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Isaiah 4	Isaiah 5	Isaiah 6	Isaiah 7	Isaiah 8	Isaiah 9	Isaiah 10

Reading from this past week: Matthew 2:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: John 1:1-5

Family Worship

Song - *His Mercy is More*

<https://youtu.be/l1GiZL60c80>

Gospel Project

Story: God controls everything

Big Picture Question: Who is in control of everything?

Answer: God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

Scripture: Job 1-2

New City Catechism

Question #48: What is the church?

Answer: A community elected for eternal life and united by faith, who love, follow, learn from, and worship God together.

Verse: 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Scripture

2 Timothy 3:12-17

- Why are imposters who teach false things about God so dangerous for us?
- Where does Paul point Timothy to as the defense for false teachers and the possible discouragement from persecution?
- What does it mean that all Scripture is breathed out by God? Why is the Bible different from any other book?
- What Bible reading plan do you use? How can we be more consistent in reading the Bible?

Prayer

*Pray that you would become a student of God's Word.

*During this week of Advent, pray that people would find hope in the message of Jesus the Messiah who came for us and will one day come again.