

ADVENT CONSPIRACY 2023
Worship Fully
Matthew 2:1-12

In this final message of Advent Conspiracy, we want to talk about what it means to WORSHIP FULLY. Worship is not a MINOR MATTER! Worship is something that EVERYONE DOES. But everyone does NOT worship the same thing. I have seen worship in SHOPPING MALLS, at SPORTING EVENTS, in CONCERT HALLS, as well as in CHURCHES. Some of these people were worshipping BEAUTY or WEALTH or SKILL instead of God. **What a tragedy, but it reveals what is MOST meaningful to these folks.** Worship has many forms, but it is always about REVERENCE and VALUE. It is about GIVING HONOR to that which AWES you, TERRIFIES you, or BLESSES you. It is the RECOGNITION that something is MORE GLORIOUS than you. It is about being CONNECTED to this One who is WORTHY of your complete attention.

In most cases of worship, this requires some manifestation of POWER or WEALTH or WONDER that is OFF-THE-SCALES AMAZING. Jesus was ALL of these things and much more, but the MANNER and CIRCUMSTANCES of his coming VEILED his glory. Yet there were some that were not fooled by the HUMBLE circumstances surrounding the Lord Jesus when he came. And they worshipped him. We would do well to LEARN from them. **Matthew 2:1-2 NIV**

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? **We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.**"

GENUINE WORSHIP IS A RESPONSE.

Christian worship is a RESPONSE to WHO GOD IS and WHAT GOD IS DOING. It always FOLLOWS God's display of himself in some form. **These Magi were responding to some kind of SIGN that God had given to them in the heavens, and they were not content to just acknowledge that it was unique. It caused them to SEEK GOD, because GOD was FIRST SEEKING THEM!** This is ALWAYS the PATTERN. We GIVE because God first GAVE. We LOVE because God FIRST LOVED US.

GOD KNOWS HOW TO GET OUR ATTENTION!

– "We SAW **[to consider what is seen]** his STAR." They knew that something was DIFFERENT about this, and it DREW THEM. They did not IGNORE it. **How has God gotten YOUR ATTENTION in life these days?**

[What was the star? A Comet – An alignment – The SHEKINAH Glory of God?]

***It is remarkable that God used a STAR to get the attention of ASTRONOMERS.**

-God often uses that which is our CALLING to CALL US!

*He used FISH to get the attention of FISHERMEN like Peter and John.

*He used CROPS to get the attention of FARMERS.

*He may yet use COMPUTERS or COMMERCE or CONCRETE TRUCKS to get Your attention!

“For a star-gazer a star; for a fisherman a fish. The Master-Fisher hath a bait for each one of his elect, and oftentimes he selects a point in their own calling to be the barb of the hook. Were you busy yesterday at your counter? Did you hear no voice saying "Buy the truth and sell it not"? When you closed the shop last night did you not bethink yourself that soon you must close it for the last time? Do you make bread? and do you never ask yourself, "Has my soul eaten the bread of heaven?" Are you a farmer? do you till the soil? Has God never spoken to you by those furrowed fields and these changing seasons, and made you wish that your heart might be tilled and sown.? Listen! God is speaking! Hear, ye deaf; for there are voices everywhere calling you to heaven.” C.H. SPURGEON

GENUINE WORSHIP REQUIRES ACTION – We saw his star and “have COME” to worship HIM!

Worship did not begin as EMOTION for the wise men. It began as ACTION. Do not WAIT ON EMOTION before you worship! Move toward God even when you DO NOT FEEL like doing it! This is a part of worship.

***They TRAVELED all the way from the east! [This was MAJOR action!]**
[J.D. Greear – Where he puts the Wise Men in their MANGER SCENE!]

How far will YOU go to worship God? Will it take you beyond where you currently are in your life? Worship is meant to be a VEHICLE that takes you on a JOURNEY of FAITH toward God. It should MOVE YOU in your heart and in your life. It will cost you TIME.

Some of YOU are FAR AWAY from God, but he has come CLOSE ENOUGH for YOU to MOVE CLOSE TO HIM in WORSHIP.

-What does movement toward God look like in your life right now?

You can worship God WHERE you are, but you cannot REMAIN AS YOU ARE. You must move away from your reliance upon your own resources to save you. You must HUMBLE yourself in order to receive the SAVIOR. These Wise Men were RULERS in their own country, but they traveled to another land in order to worship the ONE that had been prophesied about in the ancient Scriptures and had been pointed to by the heavenly light! **They knew that they had to MOVE to where HE WAS!**

Some of you THINK that you are closer to God than you really are!

Matthew 2:3-9 NIV

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 6 " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go

and search carefully for the child. **As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."** 9 After they had heard the king, **they went on their way**, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

It is SAD to see how SOME who SHOULD have been most excited about the Savior did not even lift a finger to move toward him when he came close! This was PRIDE.

***Note: The Wise Men had far less Scripture than the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Yet, the religious ones did not care to take ONE STEP toward this Great King that had been born right under their noses!** This is the difference between those who STUDY the Scriptures and those who BELIEVE them!

Some of you have sat under the teaching of the Scriptures for years. You have heard the Gospel story so often that you can tell it yourself. But you have NEVER come to the place where YOU SOUGHT him or SURRENDERED to him. You have been SO CLOSE to Jesus that you could reach out and touch him. But you have not. Why? What will it take for YOU to come to a place of GENUINE WORSHIP? You have NO IDEA what you are MISSING!

GENUINE WORSHIP IS JOYFUL and GENEROUS. Matthew 2:10-12 NIV

10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

I love the way the scripture says that these wise men were OVERJOYED when the star STOPPED where Jesus was. Suddenly, the TRIP does not seem like such a SACRIFICE. The EFFORT does not feel like WASTED WORK. Suddenly, they realized that all of their hopes and dreams about this PROMISED ONE had come true. And they REJOICED. They were OVERCOME with joy that they had FOUND the Lord Jesus. When the star stopped over the place where Jesus was, they KNEW that they had reached the GOAL of their JOURNEY. They were not disappointed that they had only found a poor child in a humble manger. They KNEW that God had led them to the KING. And they danced with joy. The same will be true of anyone who truly finds the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Source of joy and life, and our worship of him will come from our JOY at finding him.

Once they came into the HOUSE (Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were no longer at the manger), they BOWED DOWN and WORSHIPPED him.

***They immediately HUMBLER THEMSELVES before this Child.**

Our PHYSICAL RESPONSE to Jesus Christ is important. Our bodies are revealing what our MINDS are thinking. These RULERS submitted themselves to Jesus's AUTHORITY in this moment. They were not assuming a position of power.

Furthermore, their worship was not just some kind of ROYAL COURTESY. They were not just bowing to Jesus as a formal sign of respect. The word used here is a word that means, “to REVERENCE, to ADORE, to KISS.” It can even mean, “to FAWN or to CROUCH before one.” It is a word used only when humbling yourself before one of SUPERIOR RANK.

WORSHIP must involve our COSTLIEST GIFTS.

These wise men CAME PREPARED to worship the Christ. They did not SCRAMBLE to FIND something for him on the spot. The BROUGHT THEIR GIFTS for the purpose of worship! **This is what we are doing today in Advent Conspiracy.** We have been praying about and thinking about what we would like to give to God OVER AND ABOVE what we normally give, and now we are at the moment when this JOYFUL, HUMBLE ACT of WORSHIP is about to happen. It is WONDERFUL!

Giving is actually an act of worship. When we give something to others, we are “kissing toward” them; letting them know how precious they are to us. The act of giving to God is a very CONCRETE way to demonstrate our love and reverence for God. Throughout the Bible, sacrifices and offerings were given to God in order to affirm GRATITUDE to God and JOYFUL DEPENDENCE upon him. **And this type of giving not only BLESSES him, it SERVES HIS PURPOSES.**

*The Magi’s gifts helped to PROVIDE for Jesus’s family during lean times.

*The Magi’s gifts of GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, and MYRRH were SYMBOLS.
 GOLD – Christ is KING.
 FRANKINCENSE – Christ is DIVINE.
 MYRRH- Christ is HUMAN.

They found the ONE, and they worshipped him. He was more than they could ever have imagined. He is WORTHY of all that we give him and more, and HE ALONE is worthy of our worship.

Let’s pray.

FACILITATION GUIDE
ADVENT CONSPIRACY – Week 4
Worship Fully

START TALKING:

What is the farthest that you have ever traveled for a Christmas gathering? [Trip with or to see family, etc.]

START THINKING:

Why would wise men from the east care about a king born in Israel? Why do you think Matthew put this in his gospel account?

START SHARING:

Read Matthew 2:1-2. In what way was the wise men's journey a RESPONSE? What did God use to get the attention of the wise men, and what has he used in YOUR life to get your attention?

Read Matthew 2:1-9. In what way did the worship of the wise men involve ACTION? Why is it important to see that worship must not DEPEND on a FEELING? Compare the actions of the wise men to the religious leaders who lived in Jerusalem: Why do you think the religious leaders failed to go and see the Messiah with the wise men?

Read Matthew 2:10-12. Describe what you think the GREAT JOY of the wise men looked like when they saw that the star stopped over the house where the child was. [Laughing, dancing, etc.] Why is JOY such an important part of worship? Why is it important to see that the wise men ALREADY had GIFTS ready for the King when they arrived?

START PRAYING:

Ask God to help you become more intentional and passionate in your expressions of worship this year!

START DOING:

Determine to freely and joyfully engage in worship each Sunday through singing, clapping, giving, praying, etc.