

Matthew 2:1–18 // “The Seeker’s Chapter”

Welcome, everybody. My name is J.D. and I’m the pastor at the Summit Church. If you’re our guest we’re honored that you have joined us today.

This is not normally where we meet as a church (so if you come back we won’t be here), but we wanted to celebrate this occasion here in the heart of Durham and invite all our friends to join us...

I know that many of you have your kids with you in this service, and I want you to know that as a father of 4—I have 4 kids ages 2 to 9—I know what it’s like to have strategically planned out **snacks** and **iPhone games** and episodes of **Dora the Explorer** and **Peppa Pig** to keep your kids quiet.

- And I realize probably some of you have **already blown** through your entire arsenal by now during that worship set and you might be panicked...
- I got you covered...

There are a lot of things we celebrate this time of year. Several major holidays. A friend of mine put together a list of holidays besides Christmas that we celebrate.¹ These were on his list:

- **December 5** is **National Ninja Day**. Some of you say, “I didn’t see that coming.” That’s because it’s Ninja Day. If you saw it coming, it couldn’t be Ninja Day.
- **December 16** is officially **Chocolate-Covered-Anything Day**, which I think is awesome because chocolate covered anything is awesome—because you can always suck the chocolate off and ignore the rest.

- **December 18** is **National Wear a Plunger on your Head Day**—Secret desire? This is the day you can do it and not feel weird. Tradition is to use a new plunger.
- And then, of course, for all you Seinfeld fans, **December 23** is “**Festivus** for the rest of us.” (So I hope you have your pole and are ready for the airing of grievances.)

No disrespect to any of those, but I think there’s something special about Christmas. Even beyond the traditions, and the family time, the gifts... there’s something special about the story of the **divine intersecting** the human... even for people who are not Christians, I’ve found, there’s a strange appeal to this.

I want us to spend a few minutes in a familiar Christmas story, the story of the wise men who came to find Jesus.

The story takes place in Matthew 2, which I would call “**the seeker’s chapter**” in the Bible. It deals with how many people search for God and how they find him, why some seek stop short, and even deals with the biggest objection that seekers have with a loving God.

If you are unfamiliar with the story:

- A group of wise men from the East see a divinely appointed star in the heavens, figure out that it means something significant, and follow the star to Israel.
- When they get there they ask Herod, the current king of Israel, where the promised king of the Jews, signified by this star, has been born—figuring he would know, not realizing that Herod is a psychopath, paranoid about losing power.
- Herod asks the religious leaders if they know anything about this and they tell him that all the prophecies point to Bethlehem.
- So Herod tells these wise men to go find him and when they do to come back and tell him so that he can go worship the baby too, which is, of course, a lie, because Herod wants to go kill the baby so that no one can challenge his claim to the throne.

¹ Mark Driscoll.

- The wise men go to Bethlehem, where they find the star setting on top of the place where Jesus lived, and [10] *When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.*
- The wise men are warned in a dream that Herod wants to kill Jesus, and so they take a different path home, avoiding Herod,
- The same angel warns Joseph and Mary, too, so they flee, and when Herod finds out the wise men avoided him he goes on one of his murderous rampages and orders all baby boys under the age of 2 in Bethlehem to be killed...

The seeker's chapter: Here is what I want to show you... Matthew indicates a number of things that were true of seekers of God then, and are true of seekers of God now

1. For many of you, throughout your life God has been guiding you toward Jesus

These men did not find God by pooling their wisdom and figuring out the mysteries of the universe. God guided them to Jesus through a special time.

For many of you, throughout your life, this is what God has been doing with you.

You see, almost all of us are on a search for God. You may or may not have called it that, but what we are looking for is ultimate answers.

- We want **security**—a sense that we're protected and safe—permanently; we want to find **fulfillment** that satisfies our soul's deepest thirst; **significance**: a sense that we matter.

I think it's why some people strive so hard to **get money** and worry so much about losing it. Money seems to offer us these things.

- For most of us, if we found out that next year we would make 50K more than we made this year we think the majority of our problems would be over.

But money is elusive. Many of us have found that out. You can't really hang onto it.

- When **Wall Street crashed** a few years ago you had this rash of high-powered Wall Street executives committing suicide because what they thought was permanent wasn't.
- Plus, even if you do **get it and hang onto it** you find out it's not what you thought it was. Some of the richest people are also the least happy and with the worst family lives.
 - Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, do these look like happy people?
- Plus, you can't carry it past death.
 - Some of the richest monarchs of the past tried to... **King Tut** buried with his treasures. Seems kind of silly, now.
 - But then his kids did what our kids do when we die; they'll divvy up a few things they want and they gave the rest to good will.
 - **There is a sense in which death strips all that from you... When you lay down on that gurney... all alone**
- **Forbes.**
- A lot of people look for the divine in **romance**: People think that if they are happy in love then they will be happy; and so we put an enormous weight on finding love, and staying in love, and if we're not finding it with the one we are currently married to, the only way to be happy is to find it in someone else.
 - I've known a lot of young men who were floating in a sea of loneliness and despair...
 - Problems like loneliness and insecurity... they are cured by the love of Jesus.
 - **Pascal**
- I've even heard it said that even the man who knocks on the door of the **brothel** is searching for God—some pleasure, some union, that gives his life meaning and satisfaction.

- ***I'm not sure where you have been searching, but my guess is that you have been searching.***
- And for many of you, God has been guiding you into seeing that it's not working:
 - Maybe it's come from a growing sense of **dissatisfaction you have...**
 - **Maybe worry or fear:**
 - A health scare, of you or a loved one
 - *Where our country is headed? What's going to happen with the **debt**?*
 - Maybe it has come in the form of **unanswered questions:** you listen to your college professor explain that life evolved from nothing, that nothing x nobody = everything; that we came from nothing and we're going to nothing and we die that's the end—we lay in a grave and get eaten by worms and that's it, and you say, "No, that doesn't cut it. *I'm created for more.*"

Do you see that this is a divine star that has been guiding you?

These wise men, when they encountered Jesus, it says **[10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.**

- Matthew could have used one word: "When they found Jesus, they *rejoiced*." But he used **4. REJOICED EXCEEDINGLY WITH GREAT JOY**
 - This was the greatest quest of their lives and they had found him at last.
- He was God.
 - The **love** that they had sought was in him. He would grow up to die for their sins. No greater love had ever been known than God pursuing us even to death.
 - The **security** they looked for would be in him, because in taking the penalty for their sin he would remove their fear of death and condemnation and reuniting them to God.
 - The sense of **significance** they had looked for would be found in being a part of his kingdom.

- This was why they had "great great great joy."
- **PSYCHOLOGISTS SAYS... (Safe; Significant; Clean—a sense of approval) 1 Cor 6:11**
- **Let me tell you about this in my life:** My life has been dominated by two fears: both of them really evident as early as middle school:
 - Fear of dying: had a friend die. Alone? Heaven; hell.
 - Fear of rejection:
 - In high school...
 - I'd love to tell you that I just grew out of it...
 - My wife and I sat down to make a list...
 - **Overwork:**
 - **Worry:**
 - If you unpack my fears of failure, it's fear of what other people will say about me...
 - My wife says that when I tend to get the **angriest...**
 - "You are one sick dude." So are you... I've just got the courage to stand up here... but maybe the reason I'm doing that is so that you'll admire me for my honesty.
 - Both fears—both the fears of rejection and the fears of dying—have been met for me in Jesus: In Christ I have the absolute approval of the only one whose opinion really matters;
 - If he is for me, who can be against me?
 - If he says surely goodness and mercy will follow me, why would I be discouraged by a temporary turn of events
 - If he says, "you are my beloved son, in whom I well pleased, what do I care about the opinions of a bunch of no account earthlings?"

2. You need the Scriptures to complete the journey

- Here's a trick question... very important... how did they find him? Don't say the stars.

- The only thing that can bring Jesus to you is the Scriptures. You won't find him within.
 - Jeremiah 17:9.
 - Jesus told a group in the Gospels, "If you want to know me, search the Scriptures—these were given to tell you about me." (John 5:39)
- This is an invitation to you to come back and learn.
 - Around Christmas you have a lot of what we call **CEO** Christians...
 - You'll never know God that way.
 - If you are going to know God; if your kids are going to know God; it's because they take time to learn the Scriptures and you put them in a place where they are taught the Scriptures.
 - **Men: As a father...** this is my primary responsibility. To lead them this way.
 - **Tragedy:** If you are involved in their lives, many of you care more about where they will go to college than where they do spend eternity.
 - When my children face the pain of something like Newtown, the only thing that will give the fortitude to endure is to give them the relationship with God that comes through a knowledge of the Scriptures.

3. Jesus is God's answer to the seeker's most difficult question

- This story ends in a tragedy... Herod... unspeakable tragedy. DESCRIBE
- Parent: "God, why? Where are you?"
- **This is still the seeker's most difficult question. "God, why?"**
- This story doesn't give you the answer for why certain bad things happen, even this one, but it does give you a glimpse into what God is doing about it.
- Matthew quotes a verse from the OT and applies it to this tragedy: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." **Matthew 2:18 (quoting Jeremiah 31:15)**

- That verse comes from a very important story in the OT, so let me explain to you what was happening:
 - Around **450 BC** the Israelites had been banished from their homeland because of their sin. The Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the city and they took a bunch of Jewish captives and held them as prisoners in a place just north of Jerusalem called **Ramah**. From there, these families were sold into slavery to various Babylonians. Families were torn apart. Imagine the **pain of seeing** your children torn from you; some sold into slavery to one person and you to another.² And you never saw them again.
 - This was why the mothers are weeping for their children and refused to be comforted.
 - But here's the verse Jeremiah gives **after** that one, "One day your voice will cease its weeping, and your eyes cease from its tears, for . . . (your children) shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord." **Jeremiah 31:16-17**"³
- That hope? God is going to bring back the children of Israel from exile... and he's going to do that, Jeremiah explains (in a later verse), by coming himself as a new, victorious King.
 - **This exile is not the last word; the new king is going to have the last word.**
- But first, Jeremiah goes on to explain in Jeremiah 31, that King had to make an end to our sin—to change our hearts and establish God's rule in us.⁴
 - The problem, you see, in our world is not just other people with evil; the problem is within us.
 - We may say that we have not done things like happened in Newtown, but the **10 Commandments are** the standard of what God sees as goodness. Do you ever

² 1 Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 40:1. See F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC, 274.

³ "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for . . . They shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:16-17)

⁴ Jeremiah 31:31-34

think about how you stack up next to these commandments?

- No other gods: love God more than anything else. Has God always been utmost in your passions; what you served and pursued most diligently.
 - Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...
 - Remember the Sabbath: do you always remember to give God his portion of your life—money, time?
 - Honor your parents: have you always honored the God-ordained authorities in your life? Your parents; teachers; the police?
 - Don't steal: you always take only what belongs to you.
 - Don't lie?
 - Some of you say... "Get to murder." Hate in your heart
- I don't know where you went to college, but if you get a **0 on the final**; you won't pass... Imagine if there were a **monitor on the side of your head** displaying your thoughts, no one would want to be around you. You are **saturated!**
 - *The problem with asking God to get rid of the evil in the world is that if he did there would not be a one of us left.*
 - *Like **urine in milk**; tissue paper touching **surface of sun***
 - So God dealt with our problem in a different way: he was born as a baby so he could grow up as a man and die in our place and put it away. When we receive him as our Savior he changes our hearts so that we quit loving sin and start loving him again.
 - Eventually, he's going to put the world right again. But he's going to do it in stages. He is going to remove the curse of sin by dying for it, and through that he will change the hearts of his people, and then he's going to establish truth and justice on the earth.

- **Matthew then applies that truth to the situation in Bethlehem.** These children have been murdered. But that's not the last word.
 - Herod doesn't get the last word! The new king has been born—he gets the last word.
- *But here is this king, born as a baby, in poverty, so he could grow up and die for our sin...*
- One day soon, he's going to return and restore peace and justice on earth.
 - And when he does, Scripture says, the **joy of that moment** will cause the memory of the painful past to dissipate like a **wisp of smoke**... like a **woman in labor** forgets her pain as soon as the baby is born.
- But first, he's going to end sin in us.
- Our country is still reeling from a horrible, unspeakable tragedy. Twenty children murdered by a crazy gunman.
- And people say, "Where was God?"
 - First of all, realize that getting rid of God doesn't fix the problem. If there is no God, no eternity, then that is the last word. This is why atheism rings so hollow: *"Well, that's just the way it is. The world has evolved into a dangerous place and we just need to figure out how to deal with it... **but too bad for those kids; that's the last word for them.**"*
- The gospel says it's not the last word. **A new King** has been born.
 - This King is going to **end death**, not cause it.
 - This King will not **cause sadness**, like Herod; he'll make all the sad things come untrue.
 - This king will not **issue curses**, like Herod did; he'll reverse the curse by taking it into himself.
- And when his reign is fully established, *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*
(Rev. 21:4)

- **Death is swallowed up in victory.** He took our pain and our death. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... and he shall save his people from their sins.*
- ***Jesus is the only answer to the pain and tragedy of evil.***
Getting rid of God doesn't help. In fact, it just makes it worse.
 - And I'm not saying that I can explain to you the ways of God; **but I can tell you that the birth of Jesus shows you what God is doing about sin, evil and suffering that pain is not the last word.**
- So we say:

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found."

You see, many of you feel like you have to choose between the joy of Christmas and the pain of Connecticut. Like it is two different worlds... but they are profoundly unified.

- The joy of Christmas is the only way to deal with the pain of Newtown.
- A king has been born who is going to remove the curse altogether. And then, he's going to put the world to right again and bring back the children from exile and, in the words of JRR Tolkien, *"all the sad things will come untrue."*

I'll end this by showing you that all seekers will have one of...

3 reactions:

- **Joy: a life-redefining joy!**
 - There is a difference, you know, in **joy and happiness.**
 - They got on their knees before a baby, saying that all their wisdom was WORTHLESS and offered him their riches because in the light of his glory things like gold and silver and diamonds seem worthless!

- **Hostility:** Herod saw him as a threat to his throne, and he was, and he is a threat to you, too. In every heart there is a throne and a cross....
- **Indifference: Religious leaders:** Why didn't they go? For the religious leaders, Jesus was not instrumental in their plans. They were not looking for a Lord; saw no need for a Messiah who would die for their sin. They didn't have that much sin.
 - Later, when pressed on it—when he demanded that he be Lord; when he exposed them to their need for grace; their indifference turned to hostility. The same scribes who were indifferent to Jesus in Matthew 2 are the ones shouting "crucify him" in 20 chapters later.
- You see, there are only 2 reactions: Worship or crucify
 - You really can't be indifferent, which is where many people want to be.
 - **C. S. Lewis:** *"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."*

The gospel is that:

The star brought you here... What is your reaction: hostility, indifference, or receiving him and worship?

- *God has declared Jesus to be the Lord. Have you surrendered?*
- *God has declared Jesus to be the Savior. Have you received?*

Bullpen:

The joy these wise men experienced was more than just a temporary euphoria; this was a life redefining joy.

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- This was great great great joy!
- And they got on their knees and poured out their treasures at Jesus feet.
 - Here are the wise men saying, kneeling before a baby, saying, “**All my wisdom** is worthless. You are wisdom revealed.
 - **Here are my treasures.** Everything they had trusted in was useless to them compared to him.
- A genuine encounter with the gospel always produces 2 things:
 - **Incessant joy**
 - Imagine that you inherited 150 million dollars from an uncle that you didn’t know you had... and on the way there your car broke down. Do you get out of the car; shake your fist in God’s face and say, “Why?” You hardly notice... you skip and jump the rest of the way. Your light and momentary tragedy is nothing compared to what you’ve just been given.
- **Generosity:** *for two reasons.* 1. You are so **overwhelmed by the grace that God has given to you... 2.** Things like diamonds and jewels become much less significant because you’ve found a better source of treasure.
- God, the ultimate source of security and love and significance and glory, has come to us... and in the greatest act of grace in the universe he was born as a baby so that he could grow up as a man and bear the curse of sin **on a bloody cross** in our place and thereby put it away forever!

...No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found.”

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- I’ve heard psychologists say that the human soul has 3 primary drives: safety; significance; cleanliness or righteousness—like it is good: **(1 Cor 6:9–11)**
 - Washed: the gospel is that Jesus has paid our sin debt. It’s a gift you receive because of his grace and because of his love.
 - Justified
 - Sanctified
- **Les Mis...** spoiler alert. But it’s the first scene of the movie and it’s 150 years old.
- One of the 20th centuries most intriguing philosophers, a Jew named Ernst Becker **(bio)** (he was not a Christian): *Modern society, after having ceased to believe in God... turned to the romantic partner as a replacement (for him). The self-glorification that we need in our innermost being we now look for in the love partner. The love partner becomes the divine ideal within which (we fulfill our lives). What is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to this position? We want to be rid of our feeling of nothingness. We want to know that our existence has not been in vain. We want to be justified—(we want someone who accepts us as we are and tells us we are ok.) We want redemption, nothing less... In case we are inclined to forget how deified the romantic love object is, the popular songs continually remind us...”⁵*
- We want answers.
 - When you idolize love, you become its slave, and it becomes your master. Masters are not like bosses. Masters can do anything they want to you. They can beat, kill, rape you... If you are a slave to love, you’ll do anything it dictates: cheat on spouse, hurt your kids... you’ll always have

⁵ *The Denial of Death*, 160–67.

to have a relationship: you'll be what we call a serial dater. You'll have no boundaries in your relationships.

- This is all because romantic love is the thing that provides ultimate security and fulfillment to you, so you are a slave to it and you'll do whatever it says.
- Spurgeon quote
 - *"He who would place himself in front of a fast moving railway car will be crushed and would be just as foolish as you who are opposing the gospel. If the gospel is true, remember that truth is mighty and must prevail. Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed. But let me tell you, when the railway car runs over you the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing and not leave you even a name as having ever been an opponent of the gospel. Let all the infidels in the world know assuredly that the Gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures...their efforts to oppose the gospel are not even worthy of our notice. And we need not fear that they can stop the truth. They are like a gnat who thinks he can quench the sun. Go tiny insect and do it if you can. You will only burn your wings and die. Likewise there may be a fly who thinks it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean if you can, o fly. More likely you will sink in it and it will drink you."*
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- My idol of choice has always been the approval of people
- The star. Can get you close, but not complete it. The Scriptures must complete it.

The gospel is for the outsider

- What keeps many people from Christianity is the sense that they are not cut out for it. Mistakes in the past. Not the religious type.
- The Gospel of Matthew is for the Jews, but it starts with outsiders coming to worship Jesus.
- All that has to be true of you is that you recognize there is a breakdown between you and God. That you are a sinner in need of a Savior.

You see the 2 other reactions to Jesus

You can have 1 of 3 reactions to Jesus:

- Herod: hostility.
 - Jesus represented a threat.
- Scribes: indifference. He wasn't that important to their agendas. Indifference ultimately turns to hostility. The scribes in Matthew 2 are the very ones who call out for his crucifixion 30 years later.
 - He said that he came not to be an influence, but the Lord. Follower not like Justin Bieber.
- Exceeding joy: [10] When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. [11] And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.
 - Great, great, great, joy: 4 words are used instead of 1! As kings, they fell down and worship. As educated philosophers, they prostrated themselves before an infant who is yet unable to speak. What made them feel this way?
 - There is something about understanding the gospel that makes people always feel this way. It's one of the ways to know if you've ever understood and believed it.
 - Jesus came as a gift. *Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given... and you shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.*
 - His gift to us was forgiveness; saving us from our sins.
 - (I don't know how much they understood but scholars have long observed that their gifts all point to the life and work of Jesus:
 - Gold is the metal of kings and represents Jesus' kingship.

- Incense was used in temple worship, and represents Jesus' deity. It is used over 100 times in OT for offerings, worship, or service of God.
 - Myrrh—perfume. Lots of purposes, but all have to do with anointing men. Speaks of death. Mark 15:23: "They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh." ***"The King on this day presented with myrrh in a cradle would one day be offered myrrh as a King on the cross."*** John 19:39-40 Joseph of Arimathea prepares Jesus' body for burial using myrrh.
- ***Do you understand how valuable forgiveness is?***
 - Your sins; your condemnation; what God could hold against you, is gone. When I was in middle school, and you needed to do a paper, you would get this thing called a "typewriter." (Describing this now to my kids feels like this is one step beyond the Guttenberg press days.) If you're under 30, a typewriter was this machine where you'd press a key down way far and as you did this little metal arm with a letter on it would come up and press an ink ribbon into the paper and make the letter. Did we have letters back then or just use hieroglyphics? I can't remember. It was crazy. And if you did it all too fast all the little arms would get caught up.
 - Well, if you made a mistake... there was no "backspace." You had this little bottle called "liquid paper" or "white out" and you would paint over the misspelled word and then type over it. But here's the thing. The evidence of the mistake was not really gone. First, your paper had this glossy scab on it, and if you held it up to the light you could see the old words through it.
 - Now, we have a delete key. Evidence of my mistake is gone and when I print the paper and give it to you it looks like I did it perfectly.
 - God's forgiveness works like the delete key, not like white-out. It's not covered up. It's gone. David said "Separated as far from us as the East is from the West; buried in the depths of the deepest sea!"
 - Now, the more cynical among you say, "Oh, yeah, but your hard drive has this ghost memory that Google somehow keeps a copy of that in the clouds... so maybe somebody, somewhere, has a record of every mistake we've made." Maybe. But when God says that he has buried our sins in the deepest sea he means he's taken the computer off line, erased the hard drive, melted it, put it at the bottom of the Mariana Trench and put up a sign up that says, "No fishing allowed."
 - So now, if you bring up past sin to God, God would say, "I have absolutely no record of what you are talking about."
 - Jesus didn't just cover over your sin, he put it away by suffering the penalty of it in your place and putting it in the grave.
 - The gospel is built upon the empty tomb of Jesus. Jesus took your sin into the grave but when he rose 3 days later he left it there. I have been to the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem—actually, they have two and they don't know which one is his. That's the bad news. The good news is that he isn't in either one of them. The risen Christ guarantees that no sin remains. My righteousness is complete. There is no more condemnation left for me!
- ***Do you realize what an unspeakable gift forgiveness is?*** It's more valuable than a good job; a good name; marriage and children; the praise of people...
 - When you realize it's value, you will be filled with such great, great, great joy and you'll offer the gifts of your life in response.
 - On the week before Jesus died a woman came into a dinner where Jesus was eating, and she without a word began to weep. She wept so much that she soaked his feet and so she let down her hair and began to dry his feet with her hair. Then she took out this alabaster box of perfume and broke it over his feet and anointed them. The perfume box is described as costing about a year's wages, so in our day \$45,000. Imagine that. Pouring out \$45,000 at Jesus' feet.

- People watching began to murmur to themselves, “If Jesus really is a prophet he’d know what kind of woman this was.” Meaning, she was a prostitute. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “When I came in you didn’t respond to this way. You didn’t weep; you didn’t anoint my feet; you didn’t offer me gifts. Because this woman has been forgiven much, she loves much.”
- Which makes the offering of perfume that much more significant. In those days, prostitutes didn’t have a particular place they stood, and they couldn’t dress in tight mini-skirts, skinny jeans or clear heels. Prostitutes identified themselves by perfume. As a man walked down the street he would literally be invaded by the scent of temptation. This woman is offering to Jesus everything that represents her old life.
- By the way, some misinterpret this and think this woman was groveling for forgiveness. Jesus said that her love was in response to forgiveness, not in search of it. She responded this way because she saw the value of God’s forgiveness.
- Do you understand the value of what Christ has offered to you?
- When you do, like this woman, like these wise men, you offer your gifts to Jesus. What is money? What are dreams, what is life? The glory of Jesus. The value of eternal life. The value of fellowship with God!
- See from his head, his hands, his feet. Sorrow and love flow mingled down. Did ever such love and sorrow meet, or joy compose so rich a crown? Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!

Jokes:

Frank sent this

It’s hard being a virgin, too

1. People miss Jesus because of hostility or indifference

- Herod: hostility.
- Scribes: indifference.
- We have both spirits in us!
 - Like Herod, we don’t want Jesus to take rule from us. We want to be king, and we are greedy and we exploit others for our purposes and don’t want Jesus to mess that up.
 - Like the scribes, we know about Jesus but are consumed with so many other things that he is just not that important us!
- Indifference ultimately turns to hostility. The scribes in Matthew 2 are the very ones who call out for his crucifixion 30 years later.

2. The gospel is for seekers!

- a. The wrong people are at this coronation. Gentiles and shepherds? There is an inclusiveness in the gospel that is in nothing else.

3. Worship with exceeding joy

4. They gave gifts:

- a. Gold is the metal of kings and represents Jesus’ kingship.
- b. Incense was used in temple worship, and represents Jesus’ deity. It is used over 100 times in OT for offerings, worship, or service of God.
- c. Myrrh—perfume. Lots of purposes, but all have to do with anointing men. Speaks of death
 - i. Mark 15:23: “They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh.” ***“The King on this day presented with myrrh in a cradle would one day be offered myrrh as a King on the cross.”***
 - ii. John 19:39-40 Joseph of Arimathea prepares Jesus’ body for burial using myrrh.

- d. Their gifts brought quadruple joy: the happiest errand of their lives! Not bribery or financial assistance, but they are giving up what they love to Jesus as a way of saying that what they most delight in is Jesus!
- **John Stott** (paraphrase): *“No one who ever met Jesus Christ ever responded moderately to him. The only three things you see people doing when they meet the real Jesus are to run away from him in terror, assault him with fury, or prostrate themselves in utter surrender.”*
 - *“If you’re **always** being persecuted, it’s probably because you’re rude, self-righteous, and insensitive. If you’re **never** being persecuted, you’re lukewarm in your imitation of Jesus. Jesus attracts and repels; and so should you.”*

Wise Men 2:

- Gifts (see N Guthrie book)
- They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. 4 words pointing to joy. One would have sufficed. The author is showing that this is the GREATEST quest of their lives. Is that how you feel? True worship is not drudgery, but delight.

The “present”: the difficulty of surprising people with exactly what they want.

There was an article in *Time* magazine 2006 that talked about the things Americans are most afraid of. There’s a plethora of things to be afraid of before you even wake up—the majority of heart attacks happen in the early morning; then there’s the fact that more than 600 Americans die each year falling out of bed; then there’s the choking on breakfast food that kills almost 300 each year... and that’s all before 8:30 a.m.

The thesis of this article, however, was that we spend most of our time worrying about the wrong things. Statistically speaking, the majority of things that Americans worry most about probably will never happen to them, while they give little thought to the things that will most likely kill them. For example...

- More than 10 times as many die falling out of bed as die from lightning strikes
- You are 500 times more likely to die in a traffic accident than in an airline crash
- People are scared of shark attacks or stingray attacks. You are 700,000 times more likely to die of a heart attack—but you worry more about your kids in the ocean than you do about proper eating habits. You are 6 times more likely to die from a dog attack, 30 times more likely to die from a coconut falling on your head and 100 more times likely to die shopping on black Friday than you are dying in a shark attack.⁶

This article asks, *“So what if we’re worrying about the wrong things?”*

- It’s the joy that comes from God and finding forgiveness.
- Do you know how valuable forgiveness is? If you’ve got the assurance of the presence and love of a God who will watch over you and care for you as his precious child for all eternity, that everything that could make him angry with you has been poured out on Jesus, **what more can you really be said to lack?**

⁶ <http://www.dumpaday.com/random-pictures/21-ways-youre-more-likely-to-die-than-a-shark-attack/>

- I've been listening to all of this stuff about Newtown... It's amazing how many people critique God without taking time to know what he actually says.