

# “Wise Men Still Seek Him” // Matthew 2:1–12 // Christmas with the Summit 2025<sup>1</sup> (Th 7)

**Ryah:** **Matthew 2:2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 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. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

**Ryah:** *This is the Word of God for the people of God.*

**Congregation:** *Thanks be to God.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Sources consulted: Tim Keller, “[Christmas Message](#),” sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian, December 20, 1992; David Platt, “[The Magi and the Messiah](#),” sermon preached at McLean Bible Church, December 18, 2011; Joby Martin, “[Behold Our King](#),” sermon preached at the Church of Eleven22, December 22, 2019. Bryan Loritts, “Christ, The Triumphant King,” sermon preached December 26, 2016. John Mark Comer, “Origin Story,” Matthew 1:18–25. And others as noted throughout.

Well, Merry Christmas. I'm J.D.; I've been pastor here for 24 years. That was Ryah, my third and final daughter, who turned 18 this week (PIC of FAMILY). I only have one official child left in my house: My son, Adon, who turns 16 next Thursday. (That's right, he was born on Christmas day.) Which, by the way, please pray for him, if you will—it's hard enough to be a pastor's kid; he also shares a birthday with JESUS.

**One of the most iconic scenes in the Christmas story is this moment in Matthew 2** when wise men from the east show up to worship Jesus because of a mysterious star they'd seen in the western sky.

- **And I hate to mess up your Nativity sets**, but there's no biblical evidence there were only three of them.<sup>2</sup> People assume there were three because three gifts were given to Jesus, and we figure each gift was carried by one man, but the story never says there were three. In fact, there are strong reasons to believe the group would have been much bigger than three. First, scholars say that bands of Magi in those days typically traveled in schools of at least a dozen, and each would have brought along a cadre of wives and children and servants, which would make this a group of at least 60–70.
- **Plus, in vs. 3** Matthew tells us that when the wise men came to Jerusalem, it "troubled" the whole city. Three guys sauntering in on camels wouldn't have gotten the attention of an entire city, but a dozen Saudi prince-looking guys with huge entourages certainly would have.

**All that to say: It's probably safe to assume this was a large group. And I know that messes up your Nativity scene because you don't have room for 60–70 little wise men figurines, so let me go ahead and mess it up even further:**

- There is simply no way the wise men would have been present at the manger. You see, Matthew says in vs 1 that these guys started their "journey from afar" when Jesus was born, a journey that would have taken several months.
- And vs 11 says, in fact, that they visited Jesus at his house, not at the manger, and furthermore, the word Matthew uses in vs 9 to describe Jesus at the time of their visit is "toddler," not infant.
- So if you want your Nativity scene to be biblically accurate, you gotta put the wise men not by the manger but across the room, to show that they *began* their journey on the night Jesus was born.<sup>3</sup> And I know I just created a bunch of arguments in Summit households because one spouse is going to be like, "*We really should make our Nativity biblically accurate,*" and the other is like, "*Just put the daggum wise men there at the manger like everybody else and stop listening to our pastor and his Christmas decoration hot takes.*" So, Merry Christmas.
- I will say: One of the things that is 100 percent accurate in your Nativity sets is that it was three MEN who brought gifts. And we know that cuz if it had been three wise WOMEN, a) they would've arrived on time—they would've known you can't show up with baby gifts two years later, and

<sup>2</sup> There is an ancient tradition that these 3 guys were named "Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar," but there's no verification for that. Supposedly the cathedral in Cologne, Germany has their bones in a gold box at the altar. Again, there's no verification for that, but our tour guide made a wickedly compelling case for it.

<sup>3</sup> Plus, we learn in a few verses that when King Herod learns about all this, he issues an order to kill all the little boys in the region 2 years old and under, which indicates that's about how old he assumes Jesus is. So, I know that messes up the cute little scene with the shepherds and wise men all there with the sheep and cattle, but if you want to be accurate, take the wise men pieces out of the manger scene.

b) they would've brought more practical gifts like food and diapers and formula ... not gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They would've cleaned that stable right up, and Mary would've had some nice, warm blankets. Amen, ladies?

**Here's the most important question for us to ask from the story:** *How did these wise men know to come to Jerusalem looking for Jesus?* They weren't Jews; they hadn't been raised on the stories of the Messiah.

**Matthew tells us they'd seen a strange star in the western sky that pointed them toward Jerusalem.**

- Now, stars are not typically the way God reveals himself to people. In fact, searching for signs from God in the stars, a practice common in the ancient world, called astrology—things like the “horoscope”—was *specifically* condemned in **Deuteronomy 18**.<sup>4</sup> So why would God lead a band of professional astrologers, people who were raised in a false religion, to himself through a *star*?
- Well, there is a fascinating little detail in this story we often overlook. Matthew tells us the wise men are from the east, which means from Persia, which was the place Israel had been sent into exile 500 years before. This was the era of Daniel, and Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego, and Esther. And if you recall from our study of Daniel, when King Nebuchadnezzar took the Israelites captive, he had placed Daniel and several other young Hebrew captives into “the school of the wise men.” And at first, these “wise men” were Daniel’s mortal enemies (they were the ones that got him thrown into the lion’s den), but eventually Daniel won a bunch of them over, and undoubtedly, Daniel would have shared with them the writings of Moses, which would have been kept in the library of the wise men and passed down to future generations of wise men. Those writings Daniel gave them were filled with prophecies about the coming Messiah, and one of them reads like this, **Numbers 24:17, “... a star will come out of Jacob, and a scepter (the symbol of a king) shall rise out of Israel.”** Now, Jewish biblical scholars said that “star” was not meant to be read literally—it meant “a leader who is like a bright shining star”—but the wise men read that verse literally. So when they saw the strange star appear over Israel, they said, “That must be it.”
- You say, **“Well, in doing that, was God thereby validating astrology?”** No, what you’re seeing is that God meets people where they are.
- In fact, **write this down: God still puts “stars” into our lives—signs that get our attention and quietly point us back to him.** He crawls into even your mess and your confusion and puts small signs there for you to pay attention to.

And I’m pretty confident that for many of you, if you slowed down and looked honestly at your own life right now, **you could see some of those stars.**

For some of you, it’s been through something unexpectedly good.

---

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 47:13–14; Deuteronomy 18:9–14

- A provision you can't quite explain.
- A door that opened at just the right moment.
- A blessing that made you pause and think, *"That didn't feel accidental."*
- You may not have called it "God"—but it could be a star.

For others of you, it's been the opposite.

- A hard season you didn't see coming.
- A diagnosis you weren't prepared for.
- A job you lost.
- A relationship unraveling.
- I wouldn't call that good or wish that upon you—but it can still be a star.
- C.S. Lewis once said, *"God whispers to us in our pleasures, but shouts to us in our pain."*
- I've known people who never gave God a second thought—until everything fell apart, and suddenly they were listening. Maybe that's you.

For some of you, it's come through discovery or wonder.

- In science, biology, or the sheer complexity of the world, you've gotten the sense that reality is **bigger** than the result of a collision of matter and random chance.
- I once heard **Elon Musk**—who clearly isn't a Christian—say, *"The universe is the answer. Now we have to figure out what the question is."*
- You may not agree with everything Elon says, but that's profound. He's expressing something that scientists from Albert Einstein to Isaac Newton to Francis Collins have recognized: **It's almost like the universe calls out to us, saying:** *"Come! Look closer. There's more here."* That, too, can be a star.

For others of you, it's harder to name.

- Just a quiet sense that something isn't right.
- That success didn't deliver what it promised.
- That something's missing, even if you can't articulate what it is.

If that's you, it may not be an accident that you're here. The invitation you received, the decision to come this weekend. The fact that something in this moment feels oddly personal. From the beginning of this service, something has been nudging you. Not forcing, or pressuring—but *calling*. Drawing. Inviting.

**Friend, that's a star!** That's what God does. In grace, he meets people *where they are*—and then invites them further in, invites them to *come and see*.

Interestingly, however, that star that God provided for them could only bring them partway—it got them to Jerusalem, but from there, they had to consult the Scriptures in order to complete their journey.

- Vs 1 says that when they got to Jerusalem, they asked King Herod where the Christ child was to be born, and Herod, who wasn't really a Bible guy himself, didn't know, so he (vs 4) assembled **"...and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the [Old Testament] prophet [Micah] ...' the Christ-child will be born in Bethlehem.**

**There's a profound symbolism for us at work in this too: Stars (and signs and spiritual questions) are in themselves never enough to bring you fully to God.** They can get you looking in the right direction, but only the Scriptures can complete your journey.

**This book, friend—THIS** is the gateway to God. That's why at this church, every week, someone like me stands up here, opens up this book, and reads and teaches straight from it. I'm not up here telling you about my relationship with God or my insights into spiritual life or how you can be like me. I'm opening up to you the Scriptures, which are God's guide to salvation, regardless of where you're coming from.

**Vs 11: I love the reaction of the wise men when they finally see Jesus:** **And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh ...** Now, some of you have read this story for years and thought, "I get 'gold'—that's a nice gift, and 'myrrh' sounds like a perfume, but what the heck is 'frankincense'?" (Maybe you've heard about the kindergarten Christmas play where three boys play the wise men, and the first boy brings his gift to the Christ child, puts it down, and says, "Lord, I ... bring you GOLD." And the second kid sets his gift down and says, "I ... bring you MYRRH." And then the third kid comes up, looking a little confused, and says, "Uh, Frank sent this.")

*What is frankincense?* Frankincense was a rare and expensive incense used in ritual sacrifices.

The point is these were extravagant gifts—but maybe more importantly, there was a profound symbolism at work in them too. Gold, you see, was the symbol of royalty; myrrh was an expensive ointment used for burial, and frankincense was an incense used in the offering of sacrifices.<sup>5</sup> Did you catch that? Their three gifts encapsulated who he was: This child was a King who would offer his life in death as a ritual sacrifice. They may not have understood all the symbolism at work in what they were doing, but God was using them to paint a picture.<sup>6</sup>

And that leads us to ...

## The Response of the Wise Men: 4X Joy

Vs [10] says that when the wise men finally saw the Christ child, "... they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." (By the way, Matthew uses four Greek words to communicate joy there: they *rejoiced exceedingly* with *great joy*. Literally, they had "joy upon joy upon joy." The NIV Bible lamely translates those four Greek words as simply, "They were overjoyed"—which is a gross understatement! Matthew's statement is intended to be over-the-top. He's writing like a middle schooler: they had *joy, joy, joy, joy. Joy joy joy joy down in their hearts, down in their hearts, down in their hearts*. Joy gone bananas. Joy on crack. Do the kids still say that? Joy uncapped.

Now, ask yourself: **What caused their extravagant joy?** I mean, Jesus hadn't performed any miracles for them; he hadn't given them any gifts or any guarantees of future prosperity.

No, all their joy came simply from seeing *HIM*. You see, somehow these pagan wise men understood, before almost anybody else did, who this Child actually was. This was the promised Jewish Messiah who would bring peace on earth and reconcile humanity to God. This was the great Gift that all the prophets had been talking about: a Messiah who would reconcile people to God through the offering of his life.

**You may feel like the Bible is a big, dense book, but I always tell people I can summarize the whole Bible in four simple phrases.** (This is what I say to people I sit beside on planes or to Uber drivers in the 15 minutes I have with them. "You can summarize the whole Bible in 4 phrases"): Bad news; worse news; good news(!); better news.

<sup>5</sup> "And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ... the wealth of the nations shall come to you... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord." (Isaiah 60:3, 5, 6)

<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they were fulfilling prophecy. 700 years before this happened, the prophet Isaiah, talking about the Messiah, said: "And (foreign) nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising (the star) ... the wealth of the nations shall come to you... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord." (Isaiah 60:3–6) (Pretty cool, huh?)

- **Bad news:** You and I are sinners. All of us. We have all, through our sin—which simply means we do what we want to do, rather than what God wants us to do—we have separated ourselves from God and put ourselves under the condemnation of eternal death. You say, “Well, that is bad news. What could be worse news?”
- **Worse news:** There’s absolutely nothing we can do to fix the problem. No amount of religion, no resolve to be good can make up the gap between us and God. We are under the condemnation of death, and there’s nothing we can do about it.
- The **good news** is that what we couldn’t do, God himself did for us by coming to earth as a baby to save us. He’d grow up to live the life we were supposed to live—a life of perfect obedience, a life without sin—and then he’d die the death we’d been condemned to die, in our place. And that leads to the ...
- **Best news:** You don’t have to do anything to earn this salvation; you can only receive it as a gift. For God so loved the world, the Apostle John says, that whosoever believes in him ...

Christmas is the story of God giving the greatest of all gifts to us: eternal life. The gift of knowing that you know God. Something better than prosperity, something better than earthly peace. Of knowing you’re at peace with him. That he’s faithfully working all things in your life for good, and that he’s taking you into eternity with him forever. The gift of knowing he will never leave you or forsake you, that nothing in all creation could ever separate you from his love, that surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life, and that eye has not seen nor ear heard nor even entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love him. Somehow, those wise men understood that.

Jesus gave us the gift of God—of reconciliation with God—and that’s what gives us joy, joy, joy, joy; 4 “x” joy. God is the greatest gift.

**And let me use this moment to get on a little soap box**—or maybe more like an anti-soap box; a soap box against everyone else’s soap boxes—about Christmas. People often lament the commercialization of Christmas—all the wish lists and the stocking stuffers and the piles and piles of gifts we lavish upon each other. And they’re like, “Jesus didn’t come so we could give each other gifts. Christmas should be about church and family and religion.”

And I agree—Jesus did not come so we could be more selfish and more materialistic. Of course. But in a very profound sense, lavish gift giving is entirely appropriate at Christmas, because, you see, in so doing we are commemorating the greatest and most lavish gift ever given—God’s gift of his Son to us. When my kids open up their gifts and experience joy, joy, joy, I want them to get a little taste, a little reminder, of the greatest gift given—forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God, given to them by their Heavenly Father in the offering of his Son. (*True story: on Thursday night at our first service, there was a teenager who was NOT interested in a single word I had said the entire time ... until this point. He perked right up, nudged his mom, and started nodding his head at my preaching.*)

You see, our most pressing religious question is, **“How can I know that I’m right with God? How can I know I’m at peace with him? How can I know that if I died right now, I’d go to heaven?”** I’d ask you that right now: If you died right now, tonight, do you know for sure you’d go to heaven? There are TWO primary ways people attempt to answer that question. Some spell their answer as “D-O.” It’s what you DO that makes you right with God and determines whether you go to heaven—if you go to church or synagogue or mosque enough; if you keep the commandments enough; if you’re a good enough person—if you **DO** enough, then you’ll be accepted by God.

On Christmas, God showed us that the true answer to that question is spelled not D-O but D-O-N-E. It’s not what we *DO* that makes us right with God; it’s what God has DONE that he GIVES to us as a gift. You see, *the truth is, WE* can never be good enough or religious enough or consistent enough to earn favor with God. The Apostle Paul declares in Ephesians 2, *“It is by grace you have been saved through faith ... it is the GIFT of God.”* By grace through faith. Grace means “gift.” It’s a free “gift” for you because Jesus paid for it fully through his death and resurrection.

**These wise men recognized that Jesus was the true gift**, which is what led to joy upon joy upon joy and an extravagant outpouring of worship and gifts. YOU can know that joy this weekend also.

**Sadly, however, the response of the wise men wasn’t the only response to the birth of Jesus.** Matthew records 2 others—and he does that because in these three responses to Jesus, we see the way the entire human race has responded to Jesus. You are in one of these three categories. **So, response 1 was joy, joy, joy joy.** Second, we have:

### **The Response of Herod: *Hostility***

Look back at **vs 7** with me. When the wise men showed up, **Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”** (Now, class: Did Herod really want to worship Jesus? No. Herod was **PRE-TENDING** worship while **IN-TENDING** murder.) Herod had been installed by Rome as a puppet king of Israel, and historians tell us he was PARANOID about losing his power—like, psychotically paranoid. **For example,**

- When Herod was first inaugurated as king, he invited all his family’s rivals, anybody he owed money to, to a big inauguration bash as a show of peace, but when he got them all there, he surprise-ambushed them and had them all killed.
- Then, a few years into his reign, Herod had his wife killed because he thought she was conspiring against him. And then shortly after that, he had all three of his sons killed because he thought they were conspiring against him too. The Roman emperor Augustus said to a colleague,



"You'd be better off as one of Herod's [pigs] than one of his sons. (In other words, you'd have a higher chance of surviving as one of his pigs rather than as one of his sons)." (Y'all, listen: when a Roman caesar is like, "Dude, you're cruel!", you've reached a whole new level).<sup>7</sup>

So puppet king Herod was paranoid about losing power, and now you have wise men from afar showing up saying that the true king of Israel had just been born? **Of course** Herod wants this kid killed.

Herod represents the person for whom Jesus is a threat to their self-rule. Jesus comes as the rightful King, the true ruler, of your heart. And for those of you who want to maintain control or sovereignty over your life—which is a cherished American ideal—the ability to do things your way; to have no one in charge of you but you; to be the master of your fate and the captain of your soul; to determine what's right and wrong for you—Jesus presents a threat.

When I was growing up, my Sunday School teacher used to say: "In every heart there is a throne and a cross. If Jesus is on the throne, you must be on the cross. But if you are on the throne, Jesus must be on the cross." (By the way, you Sunday School volunteers: Do your job! Most of my best theology I learned from my Sunday School teachers).

**Who is in which position in your life? Who's in control?** Who do your time, treasure, and talents belong to? Who's in charge of your beliefs? Of what you determine is right and wrong in the areas of sex or money or other areas of morality? (Do you let him decide that, or do you think you get to decide that for yourself?) Who's in charge of where you go and what you do?

- You have either surrendered to Jesus as King—that is, you've crucified any will, any agenda you have outside of his will;
- Or you have rejected Jesus' claim and kept yourself on the throne, which means your only option is, like Herod, to resist him; ultimately to crucify *him*.

You say, "Well, J.D., wait a minute. That's a little harsh. I'm not sure I'm fully in either category; maybe I haven't fully surrendered myself to him yet, but I'm not crucifying him. I mean, I believe in him; I come to church; I'm a pretty good moral person." Yes, but you see, that's not really an option.

---

<sup>7</sup> Herod was known to dress up like a commoner and go out into the city to see what people were saying about him and if he heard people talking negatively about him, he'd make a note of it and send out his goon squads later to murder them. Probably the craziest thing—when he was on his deathbed, Herod ordered that dozens of other noblemen be executed at the moment of his death, because he wanted the land to mourn his passing, and he knew no one was likely to do it because just he died

When Jesus comes into your life, he comes as King, as ruler. You either surrender to him or you reject him. It's like we say: **He's either Lord of all, or not Lord at all.**<sup>8</sup> In every heart there's a throne and a cross ...

***Again, which position is Jesus in? Have you surrendered to him?***

*So, we have the response of the wise men: joy and worship. Then the response of Herod: hostility. One more. We have ...*

### **The Response of the Crowd: Indifference**

Maybe the most perplexing thing to me in this story is why nobody else in Jerusalem went with the wise men to check out what was going on in Bethlehem. ***After all, vs. 3 says that ALL of Jerusalem had noticed the wise men coming in, and they were all troubled by it.*** Everybody was talking about what was going on, and everybody was aware the biblical scholars had been consulted to figure out the significance of this star. And yet, nobody went with these wise men to check out what was going on?

- One scholar explains this reaction by saying: There were lots of Messiah claims in those days. Every 5–6 years, somebody new would claim to be the Messiah, and so people weren't overly moved by it anymore, especially since the wise men were only talking about locating a small child, not a mighty warrior with an army. So yeah, I get that—there were lots of Messiah claims in those days. But this one seemed different, didn't it? With the Scriptures and the foreign wise men—my question is, why not at least go and have a look?

**Here's what I think: It just felt like too much of an inconvenience.** Everybody was busy and this just didn't seem like *that* pressing of a question. I mean, yeah, they would have been curious about the Messiah, but not enough to really inconvenience their lives to figure this out.

- I got a call at the end of November, a few weeks ago, from the producer of the CBS Sunday Morning program. She said, "Hey, we would love for you to come on our show and do a two and a half minute Christmas message that we'll air on our national CBS Sunday morning program the Sunday morning before Christmas. Two minutes to explain the meaning of Christmas. So write out what you'll say and give it to us, and we'll get you to film it in the studio and we'll air it." So I wrote up two or three options and sent them, and they seemed really happy—they picked one and scheduled my time in the studio. But then, like a week later, the producer called back and said, "Listen, your script was great. This is not about you. We just ran out of space in our programming and so we had to cut the Christmas explanation segment of our program. It's not that

<sup>8</sup> And, by the way, don't think that once you've accepted Christ, that battle in your heart is forever over. The spirit of Herod stays in us until we die, always fighting against surrender to God. Listen to how theologian Dale Bruner expresses it: "Herod is not dead; Herod lives on even in us, the people of God. Through our exaggerated ambitions, our pretensions, our self-centeredness; our greed for position... our cruelty and insensitivity toward others—these are the spirit of Herod in us and must be fought against by us until the Last Judgment. There are two kings at war in the world and in all of us: Herod (self) and Christ." He comes into your life as Lord, or not at all.

we gave it to someone else; we just cut it altogether.” “But,” they said, “We’d love you to do a two and a half minute message at Easter.” So I said, “You can’t afford two minutes for Jesus at Christmas? Talk about no room in the inn!” Just kidding. I didn’t say that. And I agreed to do the Easter one. But the point is, even at Christmas, Jesus doesn’t really fit.

**Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher, said that distraction sends far more people to hell than disbelief does.**

- For most people, it’s not that they overtly reject Jesus; it’s that they just never take the time to seriously consider the question.
- **Friend, hear me: Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.** He claimed to be the one that all the prophecies were about. He claimed to be God’s solution to the brokenness of the human race; the way, the truth, and the life; the only name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved.
- *The most important question you’ll ever consider is: **Was he telling the truth? Is he really God? Did he really provide the only way of forgiveness from sin? Are you really lost without him? Who do you say that he is?***

*Herod responded with hostility; the crowd responded with indifference. Both missed the joy and salvation of the Christ-child.*

For a long time in my life, I was pretty laid-back about whether I knew God. I was like, “Yeah, I go to church. I’m a pretty good person. I’m sure God probably grades on the curve.” It wasn’t until I became desperate to know—“*Am I right with God; what will happen to me when I die; is Jesus really the way, the truth, and the life?*” I knew that I was a sinner; I knew that I needed something. It was only when I got desperate that I really found him. Or maybe a better way to say that is that he found me. And that’s as God said it would be. “You will seek me and you will find me,” God said, “only when you seek me with all of your heart and all of your soul.”

Listen: The only thing you NEED to come to Jesus is a sense of your need, a need that most people in that day (and this day) were totally blind to. The only thing that keeps you from Jesus this morning is your inability to see how desperately you need him.

## Conclusion // VAMP

I’ve given you **three possible responses**: 1. Joy upon joy upon joy because you recognize in this baby the answer to your greatest need; 2. Hostility because this King threatens control of your life; or 3. Indifference. Which best characterizes you?

I believe some of you **right now want to be in category 1**; you recognize that Jesus IS who you are looking for, and you’re ready to cross the line of faith and give your heart to him this weekend. And I’m going to give you a chance in a moment to do that.

But first, let me acknowledge that for some of you—maybe you’re not fully there yet. Maybe this weekend marks simply the first step of a journey you’re just beginning; you’re seeing some “star” for the first time—**and so let me extend a special invitation to you—hear me, this** may be the most important invitation you’ve ever received.

**I want to ask you, starting in January, to give us one year of your life.** And here’s what I mean by that: One year where you commit to yourself to come to church on a regular, or at least a semi-regular basis, and get a little bit involved. We do this right here every weekend: We worship, and then someone stands up to open the Word. And so I want you to commit to coming. And when you get here, you’ll hear about things like men’s conferences and prayer nights and student events, and I want you to participate in them.

Again, I’m asking you to try it out for a year.

You say, “Yeah, but a year is a long time.” Sure, but think about all you stand to gain if this is true. I mean, if God is real, and this book is true, think about how much of a difference this could make in your life! You might discover the missing piece of your life. And if I’m wrong, all you’ve given up is a year of your life making an honest attempt.

But see, here’s what I’m confident of: ***If you give us one year, your life will never be the same.*** Your marriage will never be the same. Your kids’ lives will never be the same. If you give us one year of your life, I’m confident your grandkids’ lives will never be the same. How do I know that? Look around: You’re surrounded by hundreds of people—some of you, thousands—many of whom have taken me up on that challenge, and they’ve experienced the change I’m talking about. And they’ll tell you it’s worth it. **In fact, if you agree with that, Summit—that Jesus is worth giving a year of your life to pursue—would you clap your hands right now?**

***This is our testimony.*** If you’ve been here at this church for a while, you’ve heard me talk about how my dad, Lynn Greear, in 1973, took a step out into an aisle during an invitation one evening in church—he said yes to Jesus—and everything changed in MY life because of that. My sister and I weren’t even born yet, but my dad stepped out into an aisle to say yes to Jesus, and then his life changed, and then my mom’s life changed, and then my and my sister Christy’s lives changed, and now our kids’ lives are changing and Lord willing, one day, their kids’ lives will change. Whole generations of a family changed because one man said yes to Jesus. I want to say, “Dad, aren’t you glad you stepped out into that aisle?” What I want to ask you is, “Will you be that man for your life?”

One year of your life, starting in January.

## Transition to One Church moment: *Joy to the World*

But like I said, some of you are ready to give your life to Jesus now ... Remember, you can summarize the whole Bible in four phrases:

- Bad news ...
- Worse news ...
- Good news ...
- Better news ...

Have you received salvation as a gift? You can right now. Pray this prayer with me (Repentance/Faith).

OK, everybody look up here. We're going to do a candlelight service on Wednesday, Christmas Eve. But here's what I want to do now. Take out your phones.

- Now, if you prayed that prayer with me just now, turn on the flashlight of your phone.
- OK, now, if you or a family member has been baptized at The Summit Church this year, turn on your light. ***Let's give God praise!***
- Now, everybody else turn on your light, and let's all stand up ...

We celebrate at Christmas that God so loved the world that he gave us his Son, Jesus! And this weekend, we're celebrating the miracle that Jesus has come to a lot of households for the very first time! Hey—**many of you are celebrating Christmas for the first time this year as followers of Jesus!** *Joy upon joy upon joy!* So lift your voice and sing it with us, JOY TO THE WORLD!