



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-2018 Midweek/ Sermon Starter

Unit 1: Everything Belongs to Him
Sermon Series Title: Can God Trust You?
Sermon 4: Come Bearing Gifts
Bible Passage: Matthew 2:1-11

Introduction

We all probably enjoy birthday parties. We enjoy the music, food, and entertainment. Yes, birthday parties are exciting! They are celebrations of life. Family and friends come from near and far to celebrate the honoree. Guests celebrate the honoree with their *presence*, but more importantly guests celebrate the honoree with *presents*. It is customary for guests to arrive at birthday parties with gifts to express their love for the guest of honor. In fact, in some cultures it is disrespectful to arrive at a party empty handed. Therefore, guests come bearing gifts.

Background/Context

Matthew 2 records the birth narrative of Jesus. He records the activities of some men whose actions turned this birth narrative into a birthday party. They came to Jesus' birthday bearing gifts to express their honor to God. They were compassionate about giving, committed to giving and offered gifts that were costly. From their actions, we learn what it means to give to God. We must give our best gifts to God—every day.

A. We Must be Compassionate about Giving
(Matt. 2:1-2)

One of the most important factors to consider in planning a birthday party is the guest list. Birthday parties include individuals who are compassionate about celebrating the honoree. Matthew introduces some important guests who arrived to celebrate Jesus' birth. Some writers call these men "Magi," and others call them "wise men." There is a lot to learn from these men. They had motive and mindset to give to God. They made up their minds to give their best to God. Matthew records them saying, "where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

The wise men were compassionate about worshipping God and their worship was directly tied to their giving. Their only focus was to find Jesus and to offer their best gifts to Him. These men were not only compassionate about giving but they were also intentional about giving their best to God. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that we have been created for God's glory. Therefore, we need more people who are intentional about worshipping God with their best gifts. We must find purpose in finding opportunities to offer our best gifts to God.

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The wise men remind us that we must arrive to worship with the mindset to give God our best gifts. We must also leave worship with the eagerness to use our God given gifts to better the world in which we live.

Application Point: Where does your passion reside? How can you experience fulfillment in giving to God or to others? The truth is that we were created to worship God with our gifts and therefore, must find fulfillment in giving our best gifts. Offer your gifts to glorify God.

B. We Must be Committed to Giving (Matt. 2:3-9)

Commitment is a virtue that we all seek in our relationships. We want certainty that the company we keep is committed. For many, commitment is a sign of love. True commitment is best measured in moments of adversity. We value people who show true commitment during days of personal difficulty.

Matthew highlights the commitment of the wise men as they journeyed to celebrate the birth of Jesus. These men were Persians who traveled from the east to worship Jesus in Bethlehem. The distance from Persia to Bethlehem was nearly 1,000 miles. The trip probably took close to 30 days just to worship Jesus with their gifts. This reality reveals a striking truth: real worship always forces us to move and leave our place of comfort. Moreover, when we are committed to worshipping God we will do whatever it takes to give our best to God.

The wise men were committed to giving God their best gifts. They did not allow distance or distractions to deter them from worshipping God. Similarly, we must determine to worship God at any cost. We must be willing to go the distance in pursuit of worship. We reveal our love for God when we are committed to worshipping Him, even during moments of difficulty.

Application Point: Using the rating system from 1-10 (1-being poor and 10- being excellent), how would you rate your level of commitment to God? Where do you need to improve? God desires and deserves fully committed disciples. We must raise our level of commitment and express our love for God.

C. Our Giving Should be Costly (Matt. 2:10-11)

Matthew states that the wise men arrived in Bethlehem. At first glance, it would seem that they traveled all these miles just to observe the fulfillment of Scripture—the birth of Jesus. However, Matthew 2:11 records, “entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts.” They did not come to merely spectate. They did not come to merely see the savior; they came to worship the savior.

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Notice, these men did not come to worship Jesus empty handed; they came bearing gifts. From this, we learn that we have not worshiped God fully until we have freely given God our best gifts. Why? We are reminded, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). Giving is a heart issue. What a person does with their resources reveals what’s inside their heart. In a real sense, we freely give to whatever our hearts are tied.

The wise men’s hearts were tied to God. Matthew records, “they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” These gifts were precious commodities that were typically used for significant people during special occasions. These gifts were expensive, significant in value, and freely given to God. Like these men, we should freely open our hearts and give our very best to God.

Application Point: For a moment consider all your expenditures. In fact, print out or download your recent bank statement. Where do you spend most of your money? Remember, what we do with our resources reveals what’s inside of our hearts. This Christmas season display your love for God through your generous giving to others.