

(Matthew) True Worshipers

by Pat Kenney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of true worship, seeking God, and living a life of holiness as exemplified by the Magi's journey to worship Jesus.

Duration: 1:02:21

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:15-16, Matthew 2:19, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "True Worship", "Following Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living for Christ and not being deceived by the temporary pleasures of the world. He quotes Matthew 10, where Jesus states that he did not come to bring peace but a sword, indicating that following Christ may lead to rejection and suffering. The preacher encourages the audience to overcome their doubts and call upon the name of the Lord. He also highlights the blessings and promises that await those who have paid the price and taken up their cross. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God wants to do exceedingly great things in the lives of believers and encourages them to seek Him with their whole heart.

Transcript

Dear Lord, thank you that your holiness, Lord, is something that, apart from you, we couldn't know. But in you, Jesus, now we do have that great privilege of walking in and learning about. And Lord, actually, you told us to be holy as you are holy.

And Lord, I know that's not a popular concept in this day and age. But Lord, it's something that we can know and experience and walk in. Because through Jesus, your holiness has been imparted to us.

We didn't deserve it, but Lord, you've given it to us by faith in you. And now, Lord, you call us to walk in that holiness. And so as we study your word this morning, Lord, we just ask that we would truly be servants of the King.

Lord, submitted to you, following you and your wisdom and your counsel, worshiping you, Lord, the only true God. Thank you so much, Lord, for this time this morning. And now, God, we ask that you would give us ears to hear what your spirit would say to us as we open your word.

In Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated and get comfortable and open your Bibles to the second chapter of Matthew.

It's Christmas in April. 258 days until Christmas. Thought you'd just like to be reminded of that.

But as we continue our study through the New Testament, our second study, we come to the second chapter in Matthew, where we read the story of the Magi now coming to worship the Christ child and their encounter with King Herod the Great and Herod's reaction, first his plot and then his reaction. And it's an aspect of the Christmas story that we don't usually focus on, which we read at the end of the chapter, the massacre of the innocents. Because when the wise men did not come back to Herod, Herod had all of the young boys under the age of two in Bethlehem killed.

We don't usually think about that part. But that's what our text gives us. And I think there's some very important lessons as we go through this chapter.

So let's dig in. Chapter 2, verse 1. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king. Now this is not the same Herod that was alive during Jesus' ministry.

That was one of the descendants of Herod. This is Herod the Great. He was born sometime around, I think, 47 BC.

No, he started his reign about 47 BC and died shortly after the massacre of the innocents. It was one of his sons. Actually, he had several sons that the area of Israel was broken up to.

But this is their dad. This is the king that was known for his amazing great building projects. Even today you can go over to Israel and see some of the remnants of those buildings that were built by Herod the Great.

He had a distinct sort of scalloping on all of his stones. They call them Herodian stones. But you can tell the building blocks that he actually used.

He was a great builder, but he was also a very ruthless, wicked ruler. He ruled by terror. And even he had his wife killed, his sons killed.

He had the Sanhedrin killed. He was just a nasty, nasty person. He was a little guy.

John Corson's commentary tells us some come. Josephus, I think, said that he was about four feet four. I mean, he was a short little guy, you know, but had a tough temper and not a very pleasant man.

So in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. And the term for wise men is magi, where we get magi today. They were probably from the area of Persia or Babylon, modern-day Iraq.

And they were students of the stars and of the sciences, philosophers, avid readers. And they knew the writings of the Jews. You know, the fact that the Jews claimed to worship and to follow the one true God was not something that was just limited to Israel or just limited to Jerusalem.

That was something that was known throughout the world. And there were those seekers of God who were studying the Jewish testimonies and scriptures and the prophets. Being in Babylon, these guys would have been very familiar with the prophecies of Daniel.

And you know Daniel, in the seventh chapter of Daniel, talked about the Ancient of Days who would one day come and rule the nations. And they were looking, they were searching. Has this Ancient of Days

come? In Daniel chapter 9, verses 24 to 27, the exact timetable of when the promised Messiah, who was the one and the same, would actually come into Jerusalem.

483 years from the issuing of the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem by Artaxerxes in 483 B.C., 483 years later, Jesus came in through the Eastern Gate. And they cried, Hosanna, Hosanna. A week later, they crucified Him.

But these guys were studying these. You know how people are in the numbers today, right? Not everybody, but there's a lot of people that are into trying to figure it out, trying to calculate it, trying to look at the stars and the years and the days and trying to determine. And so in their quest, God said, Well, you know what? These guys are seeking me.

They're kind of astronomers, even astrologers. Not that the Bible is endorsing astrology, but you know, God can use almost any situation you're in, if you're seeking, to draw you. And here these guys are looking at the stars.

So the Lord says, Okay, I'll use a star. I'll use a star to draw these guys. And so they're questioning, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? They've been led by this star from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Now, I know in the typical Christmas thing, we've got the picture of three wise men, right? They even give them names. Now, I can't remember the names. But they give the wise men names.

And the reason they say there's three is because of the gold and the frankincense and myrrh. But it's likely that their entourage was a lot greater than three. There may have been many of them.

It doesn't tell us here that there were only three wise men. It just said the Magi came. And when you traveled from one place to another in those days, you went in caravans, you know, for protection.

So this caravan, no doubt, is pulling on in to Jerusalem. And everybody knows something's up. So they come in and they're asking.

They're really asking the question that the Jews in Jerusalem should have been asking. When you come to think about it, they're asking, where is he? Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? According to their understanding, he was already there. He'd be a baby about this time.

And they want to know where he is. Where is the king? They expected to be ushered to the palace to meet the king and to bring his gifts. Everybody's going, king? What king? What king? Oh, Herod better not find out about this.

If Herod knows there's another king, we're in trouble. If Rome finds out there's another king, we're in trouble. But look what they say.

We have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him. Notice the Magi were not coming to get something from Jesus. They came to give to him.

They came to worship him. And I pray this morning, that'll be your heart too, that you're not just coming to church just to get. I hope I get blessed this morning.

You might think, well, what's wrong with that? I need to get blessed. But the way to blessing is to be giving. The way to be blessed is truly to give to the Lord, to give to others, rather than coming and saying, well, I hope I'll be blessed today.

The attitude should be, oh, Lord, who could I bless today? You see, that gets your eyes off of you. Because I don't know what kind of week you had. I don't know what kind of night you had.

And here you are this morning, and you may be needing something that I might not be able to give you, that God himself might not be able to give you. But if you come with the attitude of, Lord, you do love me, and I know that. And that's already given.

Lord, I want to return my heart to you. I want to honor you. I want to bless you.

And Lord, you've allowed me to be a part of a church family. Lord, these are my brothers and sisters. How can I bless them? How can I bless them? And you know what? The collateral to that is you get blessed.

You get blessed. But it's not something you boast in. You just say, isn't God good? Hasn't God done a good thing? And that's always a good attitude to have when you do come to church.

Not the attitude, boy, this better be good. But the attitude of, Lord, what an opportunity I have to give back to you and to give to one another. And that's the attitude that they came.

Not to get something, but just because he was worthy. Because Jesus is worthy of our praise, we give it to him. Now when Herod the king heard this, he was troubled.

And when Herod got troubled, all of Jerusalem got troubled with him. Agitated. The political uncertainties abounded at that time in Jerusalem.

And news of a new king who the oppressed people could rally around could have dire consequences. So when Herod gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So the magi are coming in.

They're ushered into little King Herod, the great. And so Herod doesn't really have a clue. And so he calls in those who should have it.

Those who do know. He calls in the chief priests. He calls in the scribes, those that were the students of the law and of the prophets and of the word.

And so they bring these guys in and inquire where the Christ was to be born. Now what blows my mind is verse 5. Look at it. So they said to him in Bethlehem of Judea, for it is written in the prophet, But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah.

For out of you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Why did you wake us up in the middle of the night to come in here and do it? I mean, that's kind of the attitude. That's kind of the attitude.

Now here's the magi. They're out there in Babylon and Persia somewhere. They're studying.

They're looking. And then they see this star in the east. So they follow it.

I mean, talk about the resources and the energy and the excitement and the passion, all of that that went in to seeking the ancient of days, this new king, to seek him. And here are the very new king's people just

kind of quoting a verse, but not doing anything about it. They're quoting Micah 5, 2. You, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting.

And the magi are going, that's the one, the ancient of days. And he's in Bethlehem. Where's Bethlehem? How much farther east do we have to go? Over the next hill.

It was only five miles away. Bethlehem's only five miles away from Jerusalem. So the magi are seeking the king.

Herod's opposing the king. And the Jewish priests are ignoring the king. These priests knew the scriptures and pointed others to the savior, but they would not go to worship him themselves.

They quote Micah 5, but they didn't obey it. Think about that. They were five miles from the very son of God and yet didn't go to see him.

The Gentiles sought and found him, but the Jews did not. You know, the scripture says that he is near to those who call upon him. And I would just say to you, if you feel distant from God, he is not that far from you.

You turn your heart to him. You confess your sin. You acknowledge Jesus as Lord by faith and you will find fellowship with the one true God.

You will seek him and be found by him. And that's been true for centuries, for millennia. We see the example of it here.

And here's non-Jews coming to seek the king of the Jews. You know, you can even be a religious person. You could be raised in a church.

You could be baptized in a church and still not know the Lord. Dare I say you could even come to Calvary Chapel and not know the Lord. Hopefully not for not too long because we proclaim him all the time.

But it is possible, you know, to look at church as this is something religious I do rather than actually knowing the Savior. The Savior came to be known not just as a person of history but to be known personally and intimately by each of us. And I pray you know him today.

And if you don't know him, he's not that far away. I think of the work God must have had to do to get you here today if you don't know him. Dare I say he moved mountains to get you to be here on Sunday morning.

And that's because he loves you. Now, what do you do? Well, you know he's not that far. Go over the hill of your unbelief.

Go down through that little valley of your doubts and call upon the name of the Lord today and he will be found and you can know him. The last part of verse six, it said that for speaking of this prophecy of the ruler that would come and it's a beautiful picture as it speaks of him as being the shepherd. He will shepherd my people, Israel.

A ruler who would shepherd his people. To shepherd means to tend and to feed as a shepherd. Very different from Caesar Augustus.

Very different from Herod the Great who was a tyrant. But this is a king who would feed and who would shepherd. I'll tell you what, that sure gives us a good model for leadership today, doesn't it? A model for leadership in the church today.

Acts 20, 28 says, therefore take heed to yourselves. This was a time when Paul gathered all of the pastors of the young churches together as he was on his way to Jerusalem. And he gathered them all together and he said, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.

As leaders in the church, as teachers in the church, as pastors in the church, pastor, Sunday school teacher, elder, home group leader, whatever position of leadership you might have. In your own home, as a parent, you're a leader. As an older brother or sister, you're a leader.

We're called to shepherd, to tend, to feed those that we're put in responsibility over. Not to rule over with an iron fist, but to feed and to build up. And if God has you in those kind of positions, don't be so hung up on your position.

Be careful when you start getting hung up on, well, they're not respecting me. They're not listening to me. Be careful of that.

Because then you've gone from your ministry of feeding to one of ruling unlike a shepherd, but more like a monarch or a tyrant. This has been given to us from the Holy Spirit. The pastors of your church here have been given to you by the Holy Spirit.

You haven't been given for us to rule. We have been given to you to serve. There's a big difference.

And you find the attitudes change when you come as a servant and as a shepherd to feed. I love the counsel that God gives. You're going to get certain things from this passage as you go through it, and I as a pastor get certain things through it as I go through it.

And I get exhorted, and I get reminded. If that's what Jesus was, if that's who the ruler was going to be, then how dare I take a higher place than that? So it's good counsel. Verse 7, Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men... Come here, you guys.

We need to talk. ...determined from them what time the star appeared. So he calculated back, and in that figured about how old this child would be.

And so he sent them to Bethlehem. Deceitfully, though, he said, Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found him, bring back word to me that I may come and worship him also. And these guys were sharp.

You know, these guys probably, I wouldn't be a bit surprised as they were going out, went, you know, there's some fishy here, some not right, because here's supposedly the king, the ruler of the Jews, and he's not going to worship this ancient of days. Something's wrong here. And so when they heard the king, they departed.

And behold, the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And, you know, there's been a lot of discussion in scientific areas and astronomical areas trying to figure out this star, trying to find perhaps a natural explanation for this star. Was it a

supernova, you know, of a particular star that appeared in the sky? And they followed it.

Maybe. I don't know. All I know is God sent a star.

God can do that kind of stuff, because he made the stars, you know. Look back in Genesis. He talks about the sun and the moon, and then it goes, oh, yes, and he made the stars too.

Kind of as an afterthought just to make the sky pretty. Why not? Why wouldn't a God of love? Because how many of you have been out in the desert at night and looked up and went, oh. I mean, it takes your breath away.

It absolutely takes your breath away. And a shooting star coming across. I mean, the beauty of it is unmatched.

And the Bible says the heavens declare the glory of God. And as we study now through the Hubble and other deep space sensors, you know, we come to find out, whoa, it's not just a bunch of little dots up there. Though some of those little dots are whole galaxies.

And God put it there for us to be able to go, oh, God, you're good. Or the first time a person who doesn't know the Lord sees it, they look and go, oh. I don't think you can truly study the physical universe without being in absolute awe to its magnificence, to the incredible detail and order that God has created.

And so this star stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. Now, that's kind of interesting there in verse 10 because it sort of seems that the star, that they may have lost track of the star as they came to Jerusalem.

And I'm just thinking about that, that, you know, here they are seeking and there's a star, but they come into Jerusalem, they're not seeking, and they don't see the star. Not that the wise men weren't, but the people whom the king was given to were not seeking after him. And as soon as they left and continued on their journey, then they saw the star again.

Again, if you're seeking the Lord this morning, he will be found of you. If you're honestly saying, dear God, I want to know you. And in knowing you, I want to follow you and obey you.

Where you lead, I will follow, Lord. With that kind of a heart, that kind of an attitude, you'll find him. You'll see the star.

God will use amazing things to lead you right to himself. Call upon him, and he will answer you. There's a passage in the Bible that says, and he will show you great and mighty things that you don't even know of.

Call upon the name of the Lord. Man, just the fact that God could get ahold of people like us, huh? That he could clean us up. And even after cleaning us up, tolerate us, put up with us, and use us.

It's truly a miracle. I thank him. God's just amazing.

So they saw the star, and they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. Now contrast that with what was going on in Herod's household about that time. Here they are with exceedingly great joy.

Here's Herod going, I'm going to send the executioner. Follow those guys. I mean, it's just, what a difference.

And I'm kind of wondering how a lot of times people's lives are like that. You've got, on one hand, the joy of the Lord and seeking and following the Lord and trusting the Lord. And on the other side, you've got, oh, everything's just bad.

It's like this dark cloud that seems to follow some people. Certainly you don't know anybody like that, but they're there. You talk to one person who's walking with the Lord, and they're in love with the Lord, and they build you up.

And then you talk to another person, and they... just pull you right down. You know? Choose today whom you're going to serve. Serve the Lord, you and your house.

Serve the Lord. And the joy of the Lord will be your strength. And worship will be a normal part of your being.

And when you get into tough situations, rather than lashing out, you find yourself falling down on your knees, on your face, saying, oh, Lord, use this situation to teach me, to guide me, to instruct me in your ways. Blessed be the name of the Lord. What a difference.

What a difference the Lord makes. So they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they had come into the house, now Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were living in a house.

So this may be like a year or two after his birth, you know, in that cave or that stable. Now they come into the house and they saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and fell down and worshiped him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to him.

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold. Gold was a gift for a king.

And Matthew is introducing the king who is not to rule by force but by love to express his will not with a crown but with a cross. They bring him gold as is fit for a king. They also bring frankincense.

And frankincense is said to be a gift for a priest. It is a sweet perfume used in temple sacrifices. Jesus, as king of kings, rules men on behalf of God.

But as priest, he ministers on behalf of men to God. Remember, it's said even now that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for you and me. Interceding to the Father for you and me.

Praying for us. Oh, I'm sure glad. I'm sure glad.

Aren't you glad? I mean, surely we hope that people around us pray for us. But we don't have to hope that Jesus prays for us. We know he's praying for us.

So frankincense. And then myrrh. Myrrh was the gift for one that was going to die.

It was one of the spices that were used to anoint a dead person. They used myrrh to anoint Jesus' body after he was laid in the garden tomb. And so the gift of myrrh was a very different kind of gift I suppose to bring.

But Mary and Joseph knew what it meant. And then verse 12. Being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

And I can imagine them waking up that next morning going, Did you? I had the weirdest dream. Well, so did I. Well, so did I. Me too. And they start comparing notes and they get it.

We're not to go back there. And it didn't surprise them. So they're warned that they should not return to Herod.

And here's something that you might want to note about worship. Because they came and they bowed down, didn't they? They bowed down to worship the king. And then they were warned by God through an angel to go the other way.

Worship demands obedience. If you're really a worshiper, worship and obedience go together. That's important in the church today.

Because worship is so awesome. I mean, just our singing praises to God can be so wonderful. And in fact, you even call the worship time the worship time of the service.

But what you're doing right now is worship as well. I hope you understand that. And sometimes we have to be careful of not just being able to sing good or to have a rush of emotion.

Because, you know, when you sing all together, there is an emotional buzz, right? That kind of comes with that. When you hear others singing and the sweet harmonies and, oh, that's good. That's lovely.

I like that. That soothes my soul. But it's not the whole package, if you will, of what worship is.

Because our worship team will tell you they don't prepare to entertain you. They prepare to worship God. And their prayer is that as they're worshipping God, you're worshipping God too.

You're the choir. And together our praises are lifted to the Lord. So when we come in, we're not singing to them or even just with them.

We're singing to the Lord. That's what worship is supposed to be. As you give your praises to God.

The consequence of giving your praises to God is an obedient heart to obey Him. Because as we open His Word, He instructs us. He guides us.

The Spirit of God, maybe He may take one verse and deal with me. He'll take another verse and deal with you. But the point of us going through the Word is that God would instruct us and deal with us and lead us in the path of righteousness.

Lead us in the way that we should go. So if we're a true worshiper, we're gonna have a yielded heart to Him. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

And when he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. And I think there we can see that Joseph and Mary were worshipers as well. Because as the Lord speaks to him, He obeys.

And there, when he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, departed for Egypt, verse 15, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the

prophet, saying, Out of Egypt I called my son. And this is a fulfillment from Hosea, chapter 11. There are dozens and dozens of references that Matthew gives to the Old Testament to substantiate the kingship, the messiahship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Messiah in the Old Testament. And he wants him to stay there until Herod's dead. Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

And then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, and this is a quote from Jeremiah 31, 15. A voice was heard in Ramah. Ramah was that processing point for the exiles who were taken to Babylon several centuries earlier.

A voice was heard in Ramah lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more. This would be the other side of Christmas.

John Corson had a study he did on this and he entitled it Bedlam in Bethlehem. Bedlam in Bethlehem. And he pointed out that the coming of Christ causes pain.

The coming of Christ causes pain. We read in Matthew chapter 10 where Jesus said, For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.

The coming of Christ still causes pain. When you open up your heart to Jesus, to the babe of Bethlehem, understand that pain and separation are sure to follow. That's what Jesus promised.

Now consider this. In chapter 10 of Matthew, he talks about division among family and division among friends and division among the flesh. First among family.

You remember in later on, well, we'll get to it in a little while, Matthew chapter 5, verse 21 we read, And going from there, Jesus saw another two brethren, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets. And he called them, and they immediately left the ship and their father and followed him. You who give your lives to Jesus, understand this.

It may mean leaving your father and mother. I'm not talking about leaving them physically, but about the pain of their inability to understand where you're at or what you're doing. Can anybody relate to that? That they don't understand.

In fact, I remember when we were just coming to know the Lord in the early 70s, and I've heard from youth pastors today the same thing, that many parents would rather have their kids smoking pot and having sex than to be a Jesus freak. You're not coming to Jesus freak, are you? Anything but that, I'd say there would be separation and pain as a result of that. I'm not saying you disown your parents or your family when you get saved.

Oh, on the contrary, you're on your knees and interceding and praying for them more than you ever have before. But don't expect to have spiritual intimacy with them if they're not born again. Respect them, love

them, pray for them, visit them.

I don't think the Bible tells us that we're not to have any contact with our family if they don't know the Lord. But understand the cost of following Jesus is often that you can get together with family, but it's very shallow. They don't understand what's going on in the heart.

That's painful. There can be division among friends. The sword comes and suddenly the group that you hang out with is no longer so inclined to include you in their parties.

Oh, you used to be so much fun, they say. What happened to you? Corson tells the story of Don McClure. He's another one of the early Calvary pastors, great teacher of the word.

They said when he was about 19 or 20 years old, he had a group of friends that hung around him and partied with him. And Don began attending Lake Avenue Congregational Church up in the LA area. And he heard the gospel and he got saved.

And his friends didn't see him for quite a while, so they went to his house one day and they said, Don, where you been? And he said, I've been going to Lake Avenue. And one of the guys said, Oh, I'd love to go with you. You would? Yeah.

How about Sunday? Great. So the next Sunday when Don picked him up for church, his friend was dressed in a T-shirt and cutoffs, held his cooler in his hand. And Don said, Are you ready to go? And he said, Yeah.

Well, do you know where you're going? He goes, Yeah, we're going to Lake Havasu. He said, No, not Lake Havasu. Lake Avenue.

Lake Avenue Church. Oh, he said. And his friend walked away and Don never saw him again.

Never saw him again. So if you want to go to Havasu and party, great. Bring the coolers, bring the rods and reels, get the wraps ready.

But say, I'm going to Bible study. And those who were once friends to you won't hang out with you. And that's a fact.

It'll cost you. In a sense, they'll be bloodshed. It's painful.

There's a division among the flesh. If you're truly sincere about following this babe of Bethlehem, the flesh has to die. That's what it says in Matthew 10.

And he who doesn't take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Well, what's a cross? It's not a piece of jewelry. Okay, I'll just put my cross cufflinks.

You know, I'll have it. The cross was an instrument of death. If anyone come after me, Jesus said, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow after me.

Paul understood this in the epistles. He talked about how I die daily. There's a dying to the flesh when you're going to follow Jesus.

And the flesh doesn't die easily. Amen? We all know that. It screams and it cries, satisfy me! And you who are serious must say, the sword has come.

I will no longer give in to my fleshly impulses and desires. I will not be dominated by my flesh and by the sins of society. That's not me anymore.

Jesus has taken that. But we've got to be willing to say that. What about you? What would happen if suddenly you were absolutely forbidden to name the name of Jesus Christ? Would you be willing to suffer or to be tortured or to die? Some of you might be going, no, come on, wait a minute now.

Come on. I just want to feel good. Come on, man.

What are you laying this dying stuff on me for? Because the feel good isn't reality. It's fantasy. And it can lead you to hell.

You know, this life goes by fast. And only what's done for Christ will last, one poet said. We need to live for Christ now.

And we may suffer the rejection of the world, but what we will gain, we won't even remember the suffering. In Matthew 10, Jesus said, Think not that I'm come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace but a sword.

In John 15, 20, Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. And if they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you. No brainer.

And in Jeremiah 31 that we just read, Thus says the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation and weeping. But, wait, there is a footnote that we need to consider. Because the Jews knew the Old Testament scriptures well.

They knew that Jeremiah chapters 30 to 33, unlike the rest of the book, were chapters of hope and rejoicing. Jeremiah, who wept over a nation about to be destroyed, gave Israel a hope embedded in those four chapters. We look at the bitter weeping from 31, 15.

But note the following verses carefully. In Jeremiah 31, verse 16, Thus says the Lord, Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end, says the Lord, and your children shall come again to their own border.

Thank you, Lord. Don't cry, says the Lord. I hear the weeping that's going on in Israel, but you don't see what's coming.

Refrain from your crying. Your children will return again stronger than ever. The nation shall survive and it'll prosper.

The kingdom will be established. The desert will bloom and you'll have peace and prosperity unlike any other nation in the history of the world. That's what the prophecy was.

And I say the same thing today. Sometimes following the Savior, yes, it means the sword. It means suffering and sorrow.

Yes, there is a cost. Yes, it can be filled with difficulties. But note this, refrain from your weeping because the blessings are even greater.

Your family will be multiplied. You who have felt forsaken by your family because they think you're nuts or a fanatic, know this, you have a new family which is eternal. A family with the same values and heart and priorities as yours.

Brothers and sisters who care about you. Older brothers and sisters who will be fathers and mothers to you. And that's really the meaning behind the dialogue over in Mark 10 where Peter said, Lo, we have left all and have followed after you.

And Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there's no man who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother, wife, children, friends, lands for my sake and the gospels, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time houses, brothers and sisters, mothers, children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life. A hundredfold. Wow, that's pretty cool.

How could that be? How could that be? Here's how, if my house burned down today, I know there'd be dozens of people who could take Joyce and I in, at least for a while. Because in this family, we have hundreds of homes. We have brothers, we have friends and sisters and mothers.

And it's much better than us just having our own little trip. We've got something much bigger. It's called the family of God.

And your friend, we talk about friends that bail, but your friend, capital F, will be faithful. If my friends forsake me, so be it. I've exchanged friends that are fickle for a friend that will never fail, even when I fail him.

And that's the kind of friend I need and want. And as far as your flesh goes, let it die. Just let it die.

In Matthew 10, 39, we read, he who finds his flesh will lose it. But he who loses his life for my sake will find it. You'll find it.

If you live just for your family, your friends or your flesh, scriptures say you're going to lose everything. But if you give up your life and say, Lord, I'm following you, I'm dying to myself, let the sword strike where it will, you will find life. And that's the irony of Christianity.

The more you die, the more you live. The more you get out of the way, the more the Lord works through you. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will lift you up.

You can't get lifted up until you're humble so that when he lifts you up, you're not going, yeah. Look who I am. Quoting Corson again, follow the babe of Bethlehem.

Yes, there will be weeping. Yes, there will be lamenting. That's what Jeremiah 31, 15 promised.

But don't forget verse 16. Good things are coming. There may be weeping for a moment, but there are incredible blessings and promises to unfold.

You who have paid the price and taken up the cross, refrain from weeping. There can be hurts and sorrows, but the blessings you have presently and those that lie ahead are oh so much greater than you could possibly imagine. All trust the Lord today with your whole heart and soul and mind and strength.

We wrap up our chapter. Verse 19, when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. There's another dream.

Kind of wish the Lord had called me to the ministry of sleeping. Four times in two chapters, the Lord speaks to Joseph in his sleep here. But Herod's dead, okay? Herod's dead.

And he left three sons and the kingdom at his death was divided between the three of them. One of them was Archelos. He was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria to Philip, Bethany, and Trachonitis down to the south and to Antipas, Galilee, and Perea up to the north.

So it's kind of in three segments the land of Israel was divided. Each of these guys was also called Herod. And these are the individuals who are so frequently referred to in the New Testament during the ministry of the Savior and in the labors of the apostles.

It's the descendants of Herod the Great. So verse 20, the angel says, in the dream arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the young child's life are dead. And then he arose and took the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelos, this is the kid of Herod that was kind of over Jerusalem, instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there because he was wicked, just as wicked as his father was. So instead he went, he was warned by God in a dream and he turned aside into the region of Galilee. So remember at this time, Palestine was divided into three parts, Galilee on the north, Samaria in the middle and Judea on the south.

Galilee was under the government of Herod Antipas who was comparatively a mild prince and in his dominions, Joseph might find safety. So he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene. Now that phrase, he shall be called a Nazarene is not a biblically recorded prophecy, but probably a well-known rabbinical prophecy or interpretation at that time.

There's a lot of scriptures though that speak of the humility and the brokenness of the Messiah. The leading and most prominent prophecies respecting him were that he was to be of a humble life and to be despised and to be rejected. As we look at Isaiah 53 in particular and Psalm 22, you see those prophecies.

But it is interesting in Isaiah 11, it says, there shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of his roots and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. And the word for branch there in Isaiah 11, 1 is the word in Hebrew Netzar and Netzar is the root word for Nazareth. So the name of Nazareth is actually like a sprout, sprout town, bean town, or as it was really known in those days, hick town.

It was just a dirty, dusty, backward hick town. Nathanael, remember Nathanael when he heard about the Messiah being from Nazareth, he asked, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Is it possible that the Messiah would actually live and come from a place like that? And you might think kind of the same thing this morning. Can any good thing come out of where I came from? Come out of my background? Come out of where I lived? And that ministers to us today because wherever you're living or wherever you're from, Jesus can relate to your situation.

Whatever, you live down the streets, Jesus didn't have a place to lay his head. Come from the other side of the tracks from a very poor area. Jesus came from bean town.

All right. You don't have to fear that, oh, God could not want to do anything with me. On the contrary, he wants to do exceedingly abundantly above all that you could ask or think.

Seek him and you will be filled with exceedingly great joy. Amen. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for this time this morning to be in your word. Thank you for chapter two of the gospel of Matthew. Thank you for the lessons that you show us here, Lord.

The suffering, Lord, that must inevitably take place when we choose to follow after you. Lord God, the misunderstanding that we must just, that's part of it. When people who don't know you and aren't born again, who don't know your promises and are not walking in them, make fun of us or spitefully use us and it hurts even more when they're family members.

But Lord, we know that there's a separation, that our intimacy does not come now from family. We respect them, but we can't grow in the spirit with them. That's why you told us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together because we need to provoke one another to love and to good works and to follow obediently after you, Lord.

Not just to follow the lusts of our flesh. And so God, we pray that you would give us that proper perspective and that we would seek you and that we would find you, Lord, and you're not that far away. Oh Lord, that our hearts would turn to you today.

We just pray for each one here, Lord, that they would know you and follow you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Let's stand together, folks. Now, have you seen a star? Have you seen, your star might not be just the one, a big old star at night, but something's going on in your life that is drawing you to Jesus. Something's happening.

And praise God, a lot of you here already know the Lord and you're now following him, I pray, with exceedingly great joy. You're dying to yourself and walking in the fullness of what God has to give you. But there may be some of you that have not made that decision to go over the hill, to go that extra mile over to follow and then to bow down and to worship.

You wouldn't be here, I don't believe, you'd be here this morning if you weren't seeking. There's a lot of other things you could have been doing today. But I believe the Lord's brought you and we want to pray for you.

We want you to know the Lord. Not to be a member of this church, but to know the Lord. We'll have all eternity to hang out together in heaven.

What matters is that you know Jesus. And we might not ever see you again until we get to heaven, but we want to know that you know him. And then we can say, thank you, Lord.

Right along with you. If you could say, standing here, yes, I am seeking and I want to know the Lord. Then let's introduce him to you.

Let's talk and let's pray together this morning so you can go out now as a worshiper. You don't have to seek anymore. You found him.

He's found you and revealed himself to you. And that's just the beginning. And may God richly bless you and keep you and cause you to just be to be growing in his will and in his peace.

I read in Romans 15 this week and I wanted to just close with this verse of this blessing. Romans 15 verse 13. I love it.

And now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you and keep you in his heart.

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