

Meaning Beyond the Manger

Matthew 2

Intro. All of the anticipation is over...Now what? What did it all mean? Why do so many people stop at the manger without moving on? We love the story, the season, the music, drama, pageantry of it all, but is that it?- You cannot stop at the Manger...The Manger was the starting point, not the ending point. **The Manger helped us to see that We were made to WORSHIP HIM, We were made to TRUST HIM and we were made to FOLLOW HIM...**

I. **That You Will Worship Him Forsaking All Others** - (2:1-11a, 16-18)

Herod and Magi meet but the two could not be farther apart in their intentions
HEROD was like the people Jesus spoke to when He said, "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 'This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me; in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.'"

III. "Everyone Worships. Sure, not everyone wants to call it worship or even think about what they are doing, but everyone worships something. Everyone has one ultimate thing that they center their life around, something or someone they hope will give their life meaning and purpose. For some it's religion. For others it's money. For some it's fun. For others its success or power or science or knowledge or beauty or popularity. For some it's love or relationships. For some it's their family. But the Bible says, all things were made by Jesus and for Jesus... This means you were created to worship, but there is only one who is really worthy of our worship. That's why nothing in this world satisfies. We keep on looking, we keep on striving... we keep on buying but nothing delivers. Nothing brings that deep satisfaction that we long for. But when you live your life with Jesus as the center, your'e doing exactly what you were created to do. So the irony is when we give our lives over to Jesus that is when we exactly find ourselves. Everyone worships but we were made to worship just One."

Jesus told the Samaritan woman in John 4:23 "but the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him."

This is the great pursuit of life - - -

- **1 Chr. 28:9** David says this to his son, Solomon: "for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you out forever."
- **Jer. 29:13** the Lord says to Israel a principle of worship: "You will seek Me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."
- **Is. 55:6** "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while he is near." -
- Jesus told us: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the things you need will be given to you." That is the key to life.
- **Heb. 11:6** "And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." There it is!!
What reward? Does it matter?

The Key to Worship is the placement of your heart guided by God's Word! Genuine Worship is accurate, NOT, "I believe God is like...". Genuine Worship pours from a heart that has been captivated by Jesus Christ - **What gains your affections? What gains your attention? Who or what gains your admiration? Who or what will get your primary affections, your attention or your admiration this next year? Who or what will get the lion share of your time, your talents and your treasure this next year?**

Who or What Will You Pursue in Worship?

What is the Meaning Beyond the Manger?

II. That You Will Trust Him No Matter the Situation - (2:11b-15)

Magi give gifts for Jesus to Joseph and Mary - common forms of exchange that would be used on their journey to Egypt. Mary and Joseph were poor (Luke 2:24), offering turtledoves. God used these Magi to supply for this young family on their dangerous journey.

- 2 Tim. 2:13 "Even if we are faithless, He remains faithful - for the Lord cannot deny Himself."
- Deut. 7:9 "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,".
- Num. 23:19 "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?"
- When we face temptations God is faithful - 2 Cor. 10:13 "No temptation..."
- When we have sinned, God is faithful - 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful..."
- When every situation seems hopeless and no one seems to care - "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."

Will you trust the faithfulness of God for every need of your life this year? Prov. 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean...". (1) Be patient. (2) Abide in the Christ (Word & Prayer); (3) Know that the Lord has your very best at heart; (4) Trust in the Lord's goodness and His sovereignty. (5) Expect God to do greater things...

Who Will You Trust to Meet Your Deepest Needs?

What is the Meaning Beyond the Manger?

III. That You Will Follow Him Wherever He Leads You - (2:16-23)

The Lord calls Joseph to lead his family out of Egypt but not to Jerusalem. Instead, they were to go to Nazareth. Safety, right? Easy place to grow up finally, right? No! Nazareth was a town of gambling, prostitution and hard living. Everyone was leaving Nazareth for the suburbs... NOT Jesus! They followed the Lord's command and fulfilled prophecy, too! Jesus was never a man to do anything easy. He went where the people needed Him. He went to the people

everyone else rejected. He went toward the sinner when everyone ran from them. He embraced them when most pushed them away.

We sometimes struggle to follow Jesus where He goes because we would rather Jesus follow us where we want Him to go. Mark Batterson said in his book: "All In" - "Most people in most churches think they are following Jesus, but I'm not so sure. They may think they are following Jesus, but the reality is this: they have invited Jesus to follow them."

One of my favorite movies is *The End of the Spear (1956-4 missionaries killed)* - Nate Saint says to his son, Steve: "Son, we can't shoot the Waodoni. They're not ready for heaven...we are." God may not call you into a dangerous place that will cost you your life, but He will call you to follow Him where you may not want to go, to people you may not love, and to situations that may not be ideal. Steve Saint went back...Mincaye: "I learned to walk God's trail."

Luke 9:23-24 Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Following Jesus is the aim of every life captured by the grace of Jesus Christ. We are not our own for we have been bought at a price...Our will is now His will and whatever He desires, we follow Him. @ B.B. McKinney eating supper one night with his friend, Dr. R.S. Jones, missionary to Brazil, not physically able to return to Brazil. What will you do? I don't know, but wherever He leads, I'll go. McKinney wrote the words that night: "Wherever He leads, I'll go. Wherever He leads, I'll go. I'll follow my Christ who loves me so. Wherever He leads I'll go." You can do a lot with your time and resources this year, but will you use them for expanding the kingdom of God? Will you follow Jesus wherever He leads you this year, will you walk God's trail or make your own path?

What Will You Do with Your Life, Time, Resources this Year?

Worship + Trust + Follow = Keys to your life this Year!