

Coram Deo  
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura  
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi  
Deo Volente  
Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church  
By the Rev. Capt Dr. John S. Niles MSM CD

# "The Worship of the Wise"

*December 18, 2022*  
Matthew 2:1-11

There is a story about a man who was walking across the road and was hit by a car. The impact knocked him down and he was in a coma for several days before regaining consciousness. When he opened his eyes, his loving wife was standing beside him holding his hand.

He said, "You know Judy, you have always been right by my side. When I was struggling college student, I failed again and again. But you were always there with me, encouraging me to go on trying. He said, "And when I got out of school and went for all my interviews and failed to get any of the jobs you stayed right there with me, helping me to find a job." "When I started to work at this little firm and finally got the chance to handle a big contract. But I blew it because of one little mistake, and yet you were there beside me all the way. Then I finally got another job after being laid off for some time but I never seemed to be promoted and my hard work was never recognized and so I remained in the same position from the day I joined the company until now. And through it all you were right there by my side.

At this point the conversation his wife began to get tears in her eyes. He continued. "and now I've been in this accident and when I woke up you were the first person I saw. And there is something I would really like to say to you..."

He said, 'Judy, I think you are just plain bad luck.'

There are, in life, some relationships that improve you and some that diminish you. It was said that your future will be determined by the books you read the course you take and the people you associate with.

The word worship means to ascribe worth, praise, honor. And tonight we gather to do just that – to ascribe worth and praise to God for what He has done and to join with the Wisemen of old to go even unto Bethlehem and catch a glimpse of their wisdom as they worshipped.

## I

The worship of the wise begins when the worship happens **together**. "*...behold there came wisemen from the East to Jerusalem, saying 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him...'*"

How awful it would be if we had winter with no Christmas. Just think about it. Just winter -day after day without the breath taking joy of Christmas - instead just the "bleak midwinter."

When I say the breath taking joy- I'm not speaking about that moment when gifts are given or the moment we see the bill- I speaking about the experience lived together- "let us, let US go even unto Bethlehem. "For *we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him...*" They went together.

Oli and Margery had been married for 40 years. They had a patterned of doing things. Every morning Margery would get up and go an make breakfast. She would then go and knock on the door and Oli would wake up, put on his dressing gown, come and have breakfast and then go get dressed and go out to work on the farm.

One morning however, things changed. Margery did as usual, and then went to knock on the door for Oli to wake up. When there was no response, she looked in and found him on the floor. He had died. She called the local funeral director. He came and checked things out. Sure enough he was died. And he called the doctors. The director said, we might as well make some arrangements. What do you want in the paper for the announcement? She thought for a moment and said, "Put in, "Oli died." "Margery, said the director, you get 5 words free. It really should be longer. "OK", she said and thought for a moment. Put this in, "Oli died, pickup for sale."

I had lunch with an old friend. He was in Toronto to visit his parents over Christmas. We first met in Thunder Bay. We both attended the same little Church -Current River United. We both came to faith in Christ in that little church. It was great to see him again. We talked of old times and how our hearts were warmed to faith. We spoke of the people we knew and loved-- some of whom have gone home with the Lord. We spoke of how our faith nurtured their and how we grace and knowledge of the Lord. And he said, "John it's like old times. I'm so glad we were able to get together. I have not felt the flames of my faith burn so bright in a long time. Can I ask you a question? Why is it, my faith has grown cold? I still believe, but it's not the same. Maybe you know. I asked him, "When was the last time you were in worship?" "Not for a year or two before covid." I then said, "John", his names John as well, I said, "John, if you take a piece of wood out a fire place that is burning bright and hot and place it on the cement below, what happens?" He said, "it goes out." "And if you pick it up and put it back into the flames, what happens?" "It starts on fire, again." I said, "John, the reason your faith has grown cold is that you have taken yourself out of the fireplace of faith. That is why God tells us in the Scriptures to not forsake the assembly of the saints. That is why he never sent out his disciples alone but always in twos. He knew that we needed to be together for our faith to be fanned into a fire that burns bright and hot." *For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him...*"

## II

The worship of the wise begins together, and it involves our **time**. The Magi--the Wisemen--took the time to travel a great distance to an unknown destination; in the hopes of worshiping who they had heard might be the King of the Kings and the Lord of Lords. They didn't know if it was true. Yet, they took the time in the hopes that it was. "*...behold there came Wisemen from the East to Jerusalem, saying 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him...'*" They spent perhaps months searching and discussing the possible meaning of the star and also the location. They organized the trip, gathering people and supplies for the journey. They then went out looking.

It is said today that the most important commodity is time. The catch phrase of the decade has been "I haven't got time" Scripture tells us we have "three score years and ten, and it

by reason of strength four score--70-80 years--and we fly away. So teach us to number our days and apply our hearts unto wisdom. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us." So how are you using your time? Is it with wisdom?

Charles Richards has said, "Don't be fooled by the calendar, there are only as many days in the year as we make use of. One person gets a week's value out of a year while another person gets a year's value out of a week." How are you using your time? The Wise were wise because they used their time to seek truth.

### III

The worship of the wise began as they worshipped together; used their time, and their **talents**. "*...behold there came Wiseman from the East to Jerusalem, saying 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him...'*"

Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise Women instead of Three Wise Men? They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole and brought practical gifts.

The Magi were philosophers and what could be call astronomers--they searched the stars and scriptures for insight into the how the world fits into the creative order of things. They knew of the prophecies in scripture--for they were educated men – just as Herod's Chief priests scribes were. However, they used their talents to seek out the truth. Not to try to destroy it.

However, the fact is, "You can't still a gift." That's the title of a Book written by a Canadian author-You can't still a gift- it's about four American jazz musicians- Nate King Cole, Dizzy Gillespie were two of them - and the author was amazed at how they could manage to maintain their gifts even as they were experiencing intense racism - that tried to steal that gift from them. Yet, what he learned was no one could take what they had - so great was their gift.

Each and every one of you has gifts and talents. The question is what are you doing with them. Are you using them or misusing them; building on them or burying them. As believers in Jesus, we all have been given gifts that have been meant for our good and God's glory. What are you doing with them?

Imagine if at Christmas morning you gave your child or grandchild or niece or nephew, loved one a gift, but rather than opening it; rather than getting excited about it, just put it aside and ignored it. Now, that would never happen in my house. But it does in God's house. In my house it's a rip-fest paper flying everywhere--they play with everything even the boxes. But in God's house too often we don't even open the boxes. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? As believers it should be our joy and responsibility to find out. There is no way you can glorify God without knowing what your gift is and using it for your and others good and God's glory.

### IV

The worship of the wise begins together; it involves our time, talents and **treasures**. "*And when they came into the house and they saw the Child and Mary His mother, they fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasurers, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh...*" Even though they gave of themselves financially, the greatest treasure they gave was in fact the gift of themselves - as it always is "...they fell down and worshipped Him.' You think about that. Amen