

Special Messages from 2016

What Do We Learn From the Wise Men?

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men, and Merry Christmas. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter two, verse one. A few announcements before we get going here. I want you to know that not only is the Bible study moving, so the next time we'll be, as Steve said, over at the Civic Center, Community Center. Does anybody not know where the Community Center is? Over here on New England. All right, so do we have maps here today, Jim? Jim Angelakos. Do we have maps here today? No? You can punch it into your Google Maps, put the Winter Park Community Center in. I think it's 471 East New England or something like that. You can Google it, Winter Park Community Center, okay? We still are working on the sound. Checkmate king two, this is way work over. Breaker one-nine for the sound man. Come back, sound man.

Also, Man in the Mirror. We moved our headquarters last weekend and so for those of you who stop by to visit us from time to time for various reasons, we're now over on 436, just north of, I guess it's Howell Branch Road. Yeah, just north of Howell Branch Road on the west side of the road. We're excited about the move. Many of you participated. Hopefully all of you participated and bought a square foot of that.

Then, also I wanted to mention, on your tables is a year-end appeal letter for Man in the Mirror. As you're looking at how you're going to wrap up your tithes and offerings for 2016, once you've taken care of your church first and you're looking at other places to give, we encourage you to look this over. Actually, I encourage you to look it over anyway just to see all the amazing things that God is doing through our ministry. It's pretty phenomenal.

Then, also I'm just wrapping up my 29th year of reading through the Bible cover to cover and getting ready to start year number 30. I'm so excited to do it and I just want to again, as I do each year, issue the challenge for you to consider joining me in reading through the Bible cover to cover. You pick any reading plan you want or any copy of the One-Year Bible. David Delk, when he left, bought me this beautiful set of books, the Reader's Bible or something like that, so I'm just going to read it from beginning to end this next year instead of breaking it up. Encourage you to find a plan that you might like and do that as well. All right?

Today, we're going to look at an extremely elegant contribution to the Christmas story. We're going to look at the story of the magi or the three wise men as we call them. The title of the message today is What We Learn From The Wise Men. We're going to begin at Matthew chapter two, verse one. It says after Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

WHY ARE MEN MOVED TO SEEK JESUS?

The first thing I want us to look at this morning is this. Why are men moved or inspired or motivated or prompted to seek Jesus? What is it that prompts men to seek Jesus? What motivated these three wise men to update their passports and go over to Bethlehem to see if they can find the king of the Jews? What is the desire, the deep desire in a man that makes him want to seek Jesus?

Augustine said thou has made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee. We each have a God instinct. There's something of the divine nature that has been deposited in every human being throughout the world. Men go seeking after God because they have a little bit of the divinity in their DNA, this God instinct so as it is. I'm going to read to you a little bit from my book, *Man Alive*. I generally don't quote authors unless they're dead because that way, I know they can't embarrass me later, but in this case, I'm going to make an exception.

I'm just going to read a little bit from the chapter on soul-making. This book, *Man Alive*, deals with the seven primal needs, the most dominating inner aches and pains that men have. You've heard me talk about these. We did a series or two on it. I just don't feel like God cares about me personally. I feel like I'm in this alone. I don't feel like my life has purpose. It feels random. My soul feels dry. I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me down. My most important relationships are not healthy, and number seven, I don't really feel like I'm doing anything to make a difference and leave the world a better place. That's just the result of literally thousands of one-on-one meetings over 40 years of meeting with two or three guys or so every week, one-on-one. That's the taxonomy, if you will, that I've come up with, that I just see those are the themes that just repeat over and over again.

In responding to this one, I just feel like my soul is dry, I write this. Contrary to what you might pick up from the movies or from guys at the ballpark, men are driven by much deeper needs than food, sex, sports, and beer. That's because you and I have a soul. Our souls are made to long for communion with God. That's another way of talking about this divinitatis sensum, the sense of the divine, the God instinct that Martin Luther referred to. In this chapter, I'm going to show you what it means to live with an ache in your soul for something more, something outside yourself, and what God wants you to do about it.

I describe the primal need of a man's soul like this. Every man has a deep need in his soul to experience transcendence and awe, for satisfying personal encounters with God. A man can dodge this need and his soul may lay dormant for years, but sooner or later, he will long to satisfy the God-given thirst of his soul for communion with his maker. Do you remember the first time you felt this longing? If you're willing to let it, this powerful, primal need can draw you into a soul-filling experience that makes you want to shout, I'm alive. I'm alive.

There are a lot of dead men walking out there, but they know that the reason that there's so much ache and pain when we feel dead in our souls or dry in our souls, it's because we instinctively and intuitively know. Every human being, Cicero talked about it, there is no society so barbaric that they do not have a concept of God, anywhere, ever. Everybody knows that there is a God and there's this deep yearning, this deep longing, this deep desire that God has put. God has set eternity in men's hearts, it says in Ecclesiastes. Every man, woman, boy, and girl has this.

I remember as an acolyte, as a little boy in the Episcopal Church. I remember, even as a young boy, I did not become a follower of Jesus until I was in my twenties, but even as a little boy, as an acolyte down at the ... We were out in a mission church in Pine Hills, but then we'd go down to the big church, the big Episcopal cathedral in downtown Orlando. I remember, I just remember so wanting to know God. I mean, I just wanted to know God. I remember I would read that Common Book of Prayer and I just

remember, I would read. My eyes were glazing over most of the time, but I would just keep reading. I was wanting to hear from God. I was seeking God. I wanted a God that I could worship, just like these three men that came from the east.

They were probably gentiles. They may have been men of authority. They could've been kings themselves. Who knows exactly. There are a lot of different interpretations of what this is. The word "magi" literally means magician, but it's generally thought that these were three wise men at least, that had come. It says we saw his star in the east, and we have come to worship him.

There is no need that's more innate than this need that we have, this yearning that we have to worship. That's why churches all over the world are going to, their populations are going to swell over the next few days because this need is in every human heart. It's worldwide. When I was on this trip to Asia that I went on, we had hundreds of people responding to altar calls. It was crazy. I remember that, most of the things were with men, but I remember this one church that I preached a sermon in in, I get it mixed up, in Malaysia. I was in Malaysia. I was preaching and I did an altar call. Hundreds of people were coming up. Then there were these counselors and so forth up front.

There was a young woman from China, a sweet, young, college-aged girl from China. She came up and she said, I want to become a disciple of this Jesus. I want to become a disciple of this Jesus, and of course, she did. Of course, then she's going to go back to China. She's going to take this back to China. Do you know that China now has the largest Christian population of any country in the world? There are a hundred million estimated born-again Christians in China. You hear different reports, but the people in China say that the Chinese Christian Church is the fastest growing Christian population in the world.

This is a universal need. People, I'm not going to get into the four systems, but the worldly system, the moral system, the religious system, and then the Christian system. Well, people get tired of the worldly system. Then they actually want to do something righteous, and so they try to be moral and right. They can't do that in their own strength, so then they decide to become religious. Then after a while, they figure out that there's no power in religion, and every religion except Christianity is basically based on performance. If I behave correctly and do enough good things, then I'll be okay. They can't do that because there's not enough moral strength in any of us to do that. Ultimately, they take the traces of the different religions and if they're fortunate, they make it to Christianity. The Christian system where it's the only system in the world that depends on your inability to be righteous. We all have this incredible need, wherever we are in the system.

Here's the Big Idea for the day. I have a deep, **I have a deep hunger to find the God who is worthy of my worship.** I have a deep, deep hunger to find the God who is worthy of my worship. These men, they had probably, were men of means. They come from long ... It would be just like ... It'd be like you being willing to go from here to China and spend a good part of your money and a lot of time to do it to satisfy a deep ache. That's what these men are doing, and that's also what drives us to seek Jesus.

GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE US A "STAR" TO FIND HIM

Secondly, how did God guide these men to Jesus? Well, He gave them a star. Let's read verses three to ten. When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed. You know why he was disturbed? Well he was king of the Jews, you know that. He was king of the Jews. They come looking for king of the Jews. He was king

of the Jews. Yeah, he was disturbed. He was a pretty wicked guy. It was said of Herod that somebody said I'd rather be Herod's pig than his son because he killed at least one of his sons.

When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. When he called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. In Bethlehem in Judea, they replied, for this is what the prophet Micah has written. You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, by the way this is written about 750 B.C., plus or minus. 750 years before Christ, this prophecy was written by Micah. You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people, Israel.

Then Herod called the magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me so I too may go and worship him. After they had heard the king, they went on their way and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

How did God guide them there? God gave them a star. How does God guide men and women, boys and girls today? God will always provide a star to help us find Jesus. God will always give us a star to help him find him. In my own case, it turns out God gave me an actual star to help me find Jesus. I didn't find God as an acolyte as a young boy. When I was in college, I went out with a girl a few times. She lived in what was then called the Capistrano Apartments near 436 and Maitland Avenue on Lake Orienta. One night, there's a little peninsula that's sort of ... Let's just call it a corner of a peninsula that juts out into Lake Orienta. We went out there one night and we laid down a blanket on the bank of the lake on the grass with dew and everything, laid on our backs and were looking up to the sky in silence.

I wrote about this also in Man Alive, but I said that person was Robert. It was really me. I'm Robert. I just remember laying on my back and looking up to what was a beautiful, clear, star-studded sky. I just remember all of a sudden, boom. It hit me. I was a sense of overwhelm with the gravitas of it all. It was a sense of God's transcendence. There was something personal about the cosmos all of a sudden. I don't know what. I really don't even know how to explain it, but I was overwhelmed in my emotions. I couldn't speak. I didn't want to speak. After a few minutes, the feeling went away and I returned to my secular way of thinking and living for the next several years, but it had struck a match inside of me. God had given me a star.

After all those years of looking for God, as a young boy, I'm out looking for him, you know? I'm in the church. I'm out looking for him. I've taken the incense and graduating up, go the black lanyard. Eventually I got the purple one, you know. I'm the head acolyte now, you know. I'm head acolyte, so what am I? I'm proud of myself for being the top guy. My motivation, I'm so competitive. I had the black. I think you start out, maybe you start out with a string and then you go to a little black thing and then to a purple thing. I don't really remember, but all I remember is whichever one I was one, I always wanted the next one. I was willing to work and to do everything necessary to get the next one so that I could kind of compete with myself and maybe somebody else too.

But I never really had that sense of transcendence. Even then, looking back now, that was a type of star. That was a type of star. There was something that was stirring inside of me. John chapter six, verse 44. Jesus himself says this. No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. We don't go looking for Jesus. Jesus draws us to go looking. The Father draws us to go looking for him. There's nothing in any of us. If we look at the sin, if we each were to examine just the sin that we did yesterday,

we would be so repulsed. We would be so ashamed. There is not a man in this room who would not suffer severe embarrassment just to be known for the sins, especially in our thoughts, yesterday. Just yesterday. We would feel like we had been found out.

There's really nothing in us intrinsically. Jeremiah 79, the heart is desperately wicked and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Paul says, you know, I don't understand myself. What I don't want to do, I do and what I do want to do, I don't do. Why do I keep doing what I don't want to do? As it is, it's not me doing it. It's sin living in me. Who is going to deliver me from this body of death? Well it's Jesus and God gives us each this star to help us find him.

I thought of some other ones too. Depression. I know depression is a bad thing, but I wouldn't write depression off because it was ... I remember the sadness that led me to quit high school. Then I remember the sadness that I had in the army that drew me back to church, back to church where there was no gospel, but nevertheless. I didn't know anything about gospel at that time, but I was looking. It drew me back to church, you see? Then I left again until I got stirred again in that episode looking into the stars. Then in my early business career, another depression. I had already professed Christ, but I was quickly abandoning. It was kind of like I prayed the prayer and then I went back to living my old life, you see. I was depressed. God has used each of those depressions as a star to help me find him or find him again or lead me back to him.

Success. success, don't underestimate success as a star because when you are success- The poor have this advantage over the rich. They can still cling to the illusion that money will make them happy, but anybody that's ever had money knows that money won't make you happy. When you have it, success doesn't make you happy. Success makes you miserable. Success makes you miserable unless it's a response to simply being faithful, and then God blesses you. If it's the goal, if it's the thing you want that you think, if I could just make this much money, I'll be happier, live in that house, then I'll be okay. You get that, and you feel the emptiness of it. Again, that's a star that can lead a man to Jesus.

Be on the lookout when you're out and about. I'm always on the lookout at the gym for guys whose demeanor changes. They're happy, happy, happy. Now all of a sudden, they're not. I've got a guy like that. I tried to approach him here a couple weeks ago. For Thanksgiving, I said happy Thanksgiving. I said I hope you have a nice Thanksgiving. He said ah, it's not important. It's not important. Should give the money to the poor, or something like that. I'm thinking to myself, wow. This is beyond me. It's beyond my pay grade. I wouldn't know how to reach him, but God can use that deep depression that he's got. I don't know if his is from success or failure, but he has it. I feel like he's a prime candidate.

God will always give us a star to find him. Of course, you have to look up to see it, but sometimes, we are that star in the other person's life. When a guy looks up who needs Jesus, he's feeling the deep hunger of the soul for what or who, he may not even know it's for God yet, you see. He may not even know that that deep need that he has, that he's feeling, right, is for God, but it is. God's always going to provide a star for him to find Jesus if he'll look up. What if, when he looks up, he sees you? Are you shiny? Or have you turned the switch off because you don't want to be embarrassed in public?

I was with a guy in the gym Wednesday. He was asking if I was on this particular machine. I said no. He said awesome. He said merry Christmas, and I said merry Christmas to you too. He said yeah. It's going to be a good one. Then he said I'm blessed, which is a little bit of a cultural code to put a little feeler out. I said oh, well me too. I said are you a follower of Christ. He said yeah, I am. He said, and I am not ashamed of the gospel. I thought to myself, wow, this guy's got his lights on.

He was very bold. He was very bold. He's in the process of starting a pressure cleaning business. A young guy starting a pressure cleaning business. I gave him a copy of the Man in the Mirror. His name is Rodney. Pray for Rodney. Pray Rodney be extraordinarily successful because I know that wherever he goes, he's going to be somebody's star. He's going to be somebody's star. If you're willing to turn the light on and go out and not be ashamed of the gospel, then I want to pray for you too. I am praying for you too. I pray for you every week.

There are many other ways, Patsy's prayers for me. Patsy's prayers, having children, Asbury United Methodist Church where the pastor preached the gospel from the pulpit and where H. O. Giles, Bob Helmine took me out to lunch, two young guys and where Jim Gilleon, an older man, took me under his wing, disciplined me on how to be a Godly man, husband, and then to Lyle Nelson and then his wife Marge, who all those years ago invited us to a young parenting class.

All of those different things for me, these people are all stars. These situations, these places, they're all stars that God has used to guide me. You can think back in your life too, how God has always given you a star to find him but if you are willing to look up to see it, and so it is for everybody else. The reason we do look up, the reason we do look up is because of the big idea, because we have a deep hunger to find this God who is worthy of our worship.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE FIND HIM?

Then finally, what should we do when we find him? Let's look at verse 11-12, versus 11 and 12. What should we do when we find him? What did the wise men do when they found him? On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. What did they do when they found him? They worshiped him. They gave him gifts, and they protected Jesus as well.

How did they protect him? Today ... The way they protected him was, of course, by not disclosing his location. The way we protect Jesus today is by doing exactly the opposite. The way we protect Jesus today is by disclosing his location. The way we protect the gospel, the kingdom is by spreading it, by making disciples, by being prepared to give anyone who wants to know the reason for the hope we have in us the answer, to be the star for them that will help guide them to find Jesus.

Second, how do we worship? How do we worship? Well, the word worship literally means, the Greek word literally means to kiss, the way a dog licks its master's hand. That's what it means to worship. I have a prayer that I pray. I have several prayers I pray. I pray this one several times a week. It starts out, Lord, you are worthy. You are worthy and I just encourage you to, if you only do this once, it'd be great, but just to come in that spirit of worship. To me, the communion with God, it's like ...

Well it's the same for everybody. Everybody wants to have this deep, personal, affectionate relationship with their creator. I pray, Lord, you are worthy. Sometimes, you alone are worthy to receive praise, glory, honor, power, majesty, dominion, authority, wisdom, wealth, repentance, faith, hope, love, adoration, affection, adulation, reverence, awe, obedience, service, sacrifice, blessing, and thanksgiving for you are the God who is, who was, and is to come. That's the prayer. I pray that prayer many times a week. That's how I'm able to remember it now. I pray it so often.

Just pulling in the different things that lead me into a spirit of worship and communion with God. That's what they did. They came and they worshiped. They worshiped him. For me, it's a present, you see. It's a present I'm presenting. I'm presenting my worship to him. When you're trying to think of well, what kind of present can you give God, give him yourself. Give him the praise and the glory and the honor that's due his name. Give him the reverence and awe that he deserves. Give God the glory. This is what he wants.

Will he take other kinds of presents too? Will he take your tithes and offerings? Absolutely, but you know what? He doesn't even accept those if they're given with any other intent than as an act of worship. Did you know that? If you give \$20,000 to Man in the Mirror today, and I hope you do, I don't care if you worship God or not. Just give the money. No, here's actually ... Actually, if you gave \$20,000 today to our church, to your church, to our ministry, it wouldn't mean a thing if you didn't do it as an act of worship.

It's the same way with fasting. You know, this is in the Old Testament. The Israelites, they were fasting. God didn't approve of their fasting at all because it wasn't being done as an act of ... Anything that we present to God as an act of worship is something that would fit into the category of what these men were doing. When they laid down this gold, this incense, this myrrh, they were doing it as an act of worship.

Then so how do we worship? Well, on your tables, there are six ... There's a blog that I posted called The Six Worship Languages. These are the different ways, different people actually find themselves worshipping to the full, to their maximum in different ways. One person, the aesthetic, number one there, this is the person who wants to be overwhelmed by the majesty of God. This could be in church. It could be in creation, but the love of beauty, the love of order. Second one is the experientialist. This is the person who wants to sing, to want to be involved in music, to clap hands, have a full range of emotions, weep. This is how they experience the Lord the best.

The activist can't understand these other two people because the activist wants to be out pounding nails into the roof of a widow's house or setting up chairs for the mission's conference or doing something to serve some poor, needy person, taking somebody to get a cancer treatment. That's the activist. The contemplative, this is my main language. The contemplative cherishes the inner life and just likes to open up to God in the quiet of their own soul and sense God's presence.

My son, our son is an engineer, a computer engineer. Everything has to add up to him, which is a mystery to me because when things add up, that's when they don't make sense to me. It's the mystery of providence itself. The contemplative has the ability to live with a high, has a high tolerance for ambiguity, which obviously an engineer does not. I love the ambiguity of the gospel. There's the contemplative.

There's the student. This is my second worship language, if you will. This is the person who is most able to worship God by the study of this word. Then the relational, this is the person who likes to be with the brothers and sisters. They experience God and worship God most when they're bonded together in fellowship. They're most torn when there's conflict in the body of Christ too.

Now we all will worship God all six ways, but you probably have one, two, maybe three primary ways. I give this to you for you to be able to figure out what you should do when you find him or when you

want to find him, when the star leads you to him. But also to think about other people too, and when you want to be a star in someone's life, don't be the star ... Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages, we tend to love the way we want to be loved, but he says no. Figure out the other person's language and then help love them that way. Well it's the same thing with worship. If somebody, and this has been a problem in this discipleship for years, is trying to get men to all worship the Lord in a single way. You've seen the explosion of outdoor activities, archery, hunting, fishing, and men respond because they are more, many of these men are more prone to this aesthetic or the activist in doing some kind of service.

The Big Idea today, and then here are the languages. I guess I should've put that up earlier. The big idea today is that I have a deep hunger. I have a deep hunger within me to find the God who's worthy of my worship. So does every other person you will meet today.

Let us pray. Our dearest Father, Lord, we pray that the story of the magi, it's such a rich and beautiful, it's such an elegant contribution to your Christmas story, all the things we learn here that we would otherwise not know. We thank you for this story. We also pray that you would take and just superintend each of our hearts by the power of your holy spirit, the message or messages that you would have us take away this morning, whether that's coming to seek Jesus, finding the star that would lead us to him, or knowing what to do when we finally do find him. We ask this in your loving name. Amen.