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Rethinking Christmas: Rethinking A Holiday That Has Lost Its Meaning

“Christmas Is All About Worship Not Wanting” (Part 1)

Intro: Christian Linebacker video: There’s no doubt that Christmas has lost much of its meaning in our culture. Just look at the statistics. (Share) Is this really what Christmas is all about? I believe God would have us RETHINK Christmas this year. For the next 4 weeks this is what we’re going to do. (More subtle than the linebacker) Today, I want us see that Christmas is all about worship not about wanting. If we’re going to rethink Christmas, let’s go back the first one! The story of the wise men. (magi)

Matt. 2:1-12 (Summarize)

- The story about the wise men is all about worship. They did not seek Jesus to obtain anything from Him. They sought after Jesus for one purpose only...To Worship Him! This should give us a good idea of what the meaning of Christmas should be. It should be about worshipping Jesus more not wanting more!
- Let me give you 4 truths from this story to rethink Christmas Worship this year.

I. Worship Requires That We Seek Jesus

Matt. 2:1-2 “Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” (NLT)

A. Christmas is about seeking after a person not presents

- This is what the wise men were doing. They were seeking a person.
 1. What has happened over time is that we have switched the pursuits. We have traded seeking after Jesus for seeking after getting the right present for someone. (or ourselves – Christmas lists) Instead of seeking after a person we seek after things.
 2. We’ve made Christmas into the pursuit of objects. Just the statistics alone on how much the average person spends on presents tells us this. (\$616 per shopper)
 3. The original Christmas was all about finding a person...being close to a King...It was a pursuit for a relationship. We need to be asking ourselves what are we

seeking more of this Christmas...presents or His presence in our lives?
Jer. 29:13 “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*”
(NIV) What are we really seeking after this Christmas?

B. Christmas seeking requires some effort

“...*seek me with all your heart.*” This is not some passive half-hearted attempt. Seeking something with all your heart is a passionate pursuit. It certainly was a serious pursuit for the magi. (Traveled close to 1000 miles to find Jesus)

1. Think about all the effort that is exerted in trying to find the right present for someone. The insanity of Black Friday / Cyber Monday / crowded stores and parking lots / holiday stress. (In and of itself, I’m not saying any of this is wrong.)
 2. Can you imagine putting in this much effort seeking after Jesus this Christmas? Being this passionate to seek Him with all your heart. Where we value experiencing the presence of Jesus more than finding the right present.
 3. The promise of Jer 29:13 is that if we are willing to seek Him with all our hearts we will find Him...experience Him. Christmas is not just about telling the story of Jesus. Christmas is all about experiencing Jesus.
- Let’s rethink Christmas this year by seeking after Jesus. Let me give you some simple ways to do this. (slow down – pray asking to find Him – Read Luke and John)

II. Worship Is A Journey To Discover Jesus Resulting In Great Joy

Matt. 2:9-10 “*After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy!*” (NLT) They were not filled with joy because of the star. They were filled with joy because of who the star took them to. Their journey had ended! They found Him!

A. Worship is a process of discovery

1. We tend to look at worship as more of an event rather than a process. It is something that we do rather than someone we discover. The wise men were on a journey to discover a person. I believe this is a more accurate picture of worship.
2. Jesus is called Emmanuel = “God with us.” Jesus came so we could discover Him / relate to Him / Commune with Him. He is a relational God and He desires an ongoing progressive relationship with us.
3. We should be on a journey to discover Jesus as well. Most of you may be thinking, “I’ve already found Him.” That may be true, but the great thing about Jesus is that the process of discovery never ends. We keep discovering more. We keep experiencing more.
4. We will never exhaust all of who He is. Worship is a process of discovering and experiencing more of Jesus in this life and for all eternity. We should never have the attitude that we have discovered all there is to know.

B. Continual discovery results in tremendous joy

1. Could it be that some of our lack of passion and joy in worship / Christmas is due to the fact that we haven't discovered / experienced anything new in our relationship with Jesus for some time? We view it as a boring event / Christmas as an activity instead of discovery / ritual rather than relationship?
- The Christmas story has become old / stale / routine / and over familiar. You've heard it so many times, what is there left to discover? (I struggle with this sometimes.)
 2. Discovery is exciting / joyful / exhilarating. When the wise men found Jesus they were filled with joy! This was the byproduct of their pursuit. Are we filled with joy over discovering Jesus or just holiday stress?
 3. I believe Christmas gives us a great opportunity to discover more / learn more / and experience more in our relationship with Christ. This leads to great joy! If you are struggling with your joy this Christmas it could be that you're on the wrong journey.
 - Let's rethink Christmas by taking a worship journey to discover / experience more of Jesus. HOW?
 - Ask God to give you a fresh perspective and appreciation on His Story / Read it in a different translations looking for new insights / Go deeper in your understanding – Go online and research Herod / Bethlehem / Historical perspective / Worship Him for doing something so amazing for you! Engage on in corporate worship. Participate - Discover

III. Worship Gives Jesus His Proper Place

Matt. 2:11 "They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him..." (NLT)

Here are very well-educated / highly respected / very prosperous men bowing down before a toddler. WHY? They knew who Jesus was. This is important for us as well.

A. Worship acknowledges who Jesus is

John 1:1, 14 "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God...So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." (NLT)

1. Jesus is not just some cute baby in a nativity scene. He is the word becoming flesh. He is God becoming man. He is the infinite Creator of all things humbling Himself to be born as a baby in a manger.
2. We just need to try to wrap our minds around this a bit. God is the Creator of our universe. Scientists estimate that our universe alone is 156 Billion light years wide. (explain) Light travels at approx. 186,300 miles per second. God created this!!! He spoke it into existence.
3. Now, contemplate the fact that this all powerful God chose to limit Himself by being wrapped in humanity; be born as a baby; and live a human experience and eventually die on a cross so we could relate to Him and know Him.
4. Talk about an amazing story! We need to get Jesus out of the cradle and

remember that He is the Creator of all things! That nativity scene should cause us to just stand there in awe of what God did for us.

B. Worship acknowledges who we are

- When we see Jesus for who He is it humbles us. Wise men bowed before Him.
Ps. 8:3-4 “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” (NIV)
 1. When we give Jesus His proper place we are reminded of our place. Compared to the creator of the universe, we are pretty small. Often worship doesn’t happen because we are too big in our own eyes and Jesus is too small.
 2. I am not asking all of us to think less of ourselves. I do think it is necessary for us to think correctly / Biblically about ourselves. To think how much the God of the universe humbled Himself for us and then we struggle with humbling ourselves before Him seems a bit ludicrous.
 3. When we see Jesus for who He really is it makes sense that our place before Him is on bended knee in worship. Christmas should remind us of who Jesus is and who we are.
- Let’s rethink Christmas by giving Jesus His proper place. HOW? Years ago in college I had a professor tells us that He was taking the weekend to go camping and contemplate his smallness. I thought that to be strange. Now I understand. We need to contemplate God’s greatness and our smallness in comparison to Him. This doesn’t diminish His love for us. This just gets everyone in their proper places...result is worship!
- Maybe one night just go outside and look at the stars and what God created and contemplate your smallness / God’s greatness / and rejoice that He loves you.

IV. Worship Compels Us To Give Jesus Our Best

Matt. 2:11 “...Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (NLT) Once the wise men found Jesus and worshipped Him, they were compelled to give Him the best of what they had. (Describe the gifts – Gold = gift fit for a King / Frankincense = incense used in temple worship – Jesus is our priest / Myrrh = Jews used this to prepare bodies for burial – foreshadowing Jesus’ death)

A. Worship motivates our generosity

1. The wise men knew that Jesus deserved their gifts. Their giving to Jesus was motivated by their worship of Jesus. Worship and giving go together.
2. If we are truly connecting with Jesus / worshipping Him / experiencing Him / we will be compelled to be generous people. They just go together. When we are connected to His heart we reflect His heart.
3. Generosity is worship. Think of all the ways we can worship Jesus by our generosity this Christmas. (Money / supplies for food boxes / buying toys for needy / donating your time to help with boxes – distribution / all acts of worship)

Matt. 10:8 "...Freely you have received, freely give." (NIV)

4. Jesus came to this world and gave of Himself freely. He was born in a cradle and then voluntarily went to the cross and gave Himself for our sins. Forgiveness for every person is now freely offered. Relationship with the Creator is freely offered. His resources in our life are freely offered. How can we not freely give?

B. Worship dictates the quality of the gifts

1. The wise men gave Jesus the best they had. They knew Jesus deserved the best. Therefore they gave Him the best the ancient world had to offer.
 2. When you really love someone there are times you just want to do something very special for them. You want the quality of the gift to represent the significance of how you feel. (Planning our 20th Anniversary – Chart House / New Ring)
 3. Worship works like this. When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, worship is really all about love. This genuine love that we have for Jesus compels us to give Him our best. It's not done out of duty or obligation but from genuine love, devotion, and deep gratitude.
 4. Can we give Jesus our best this Christmas? Not give Him our haggard, frantic, overstressed holiday lives this year. Let's do something different! Let's slow down and give Him the best worship we've ever given Him. Let's give Him ourselves!
- What's the best gift you can give to Jesus this Christmas? What can you bring to Him that demonstrates your love, devotion and gratitude for all He's done? How can you worship Him by giving Him your best?

Let's really seek after Him / Let's discover newness in Jesus this Christmas / Let's make sure Jesus is in His proper place / Let's give Jesus the best we have. Whatever those acts of worship look like. Let's rethink Christmas by choosing to worship not want. Let's resist the cultural norms that have robbed us of the meaning and significance of Christmas and return to its foundation. Let's choose to worship more!