

Remnant Life Church

November 22, 2020

“Wisdom, not Politics”

Matthew 2:1-12

As we know, Thursday is Thanksgiving

- But next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent
- We will be participating here at RLC in this beautiful observation of the season when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ
- Now, that will not stop the struggle we have been in for the majority of this year
 - But God’s intervention will come in His time
 - We hold to that hope
 - And so in the weeks to come, as we spoke of last week, we have the joy of love and family to look forward to
- This morning, as we begin to anticipate the coming weeks, I want to look at the difference between the wisdom of following God and the pursuit of man’s positions of authority

READ - Matt 2:1-12

- The wise men of the nativity story have been called many things but the most common is...
 - Magi (pronounced MAY-jeye) - the plural of MAY-gus
 - A Magus was a member of a hereditary priestly class among the Medes and Persians of biblical time
 - Priests of ZorASTianism
 - A religion
 - They were the counterpart to the nation of Israel’s hereditary priestly line of the Levites in the OT
 - The MAY-jeye were the leading astronomers of the day
 - A primary focus of this religion was cosmic order
 - They studied the movement of the stars
 - For scientific purposes of gaining knowledge but also as a spiritual guide
 - They were not worshippers of the Creator but of the created
 - They were, in fact, magicians and sorcerers
- You can imagine the long caravan of travelers
 - The front of Hallmark cards today show 3 lonely, well-dressed camel-jockeys
 - That would not have been the case
 - Humility was not a requirement to be a priest in the kingdoms of Mede and Persia
 - These men would have been dressed in all their splendor to meet a future king
 - And there would have been no shortage of attendants, security, and underlings making the trip

- They would have come from the Kurdistan Region of what today would be Northern Iraq to the town of Bethlehem
 - A distance of over 800 miles
 - The journey would have taken them nearly 2 months to complete
- Where did they go first?
 - To Herod's palace or the temple – where else would you expect to find a newborn king?
 - When Herod gets word of this, he does not panic because he is a professional politician with very powerful benefactors behind him
 - After all, Rome put him in place to rule over his own people – Herod was a Jew
 - His chief priests and teachers of the law told him the birthplace would be in Bethlehem
 - He immediately attempts to spin the situation to his advantage
 - *Vs 7-8 - 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 search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me so that I too may go and worship him."*
 - But, of course, he had no intention of going to worship Jesus
 - But the Magi did
 - When they found Him, they worshipped Him and brought Him gifts
 - Many of you by now have heard of the true significance and meaning of those gifts
 - Gold – is the gift given to a king
 - Frankincense – called incense; used in the worship of God
 - Myrrh – is used to anoint and prepare a body for burial
 - We recognize the significance of those three gifts now and marvel at what they meant as Jesus' life unfolded
 - Gold to denote His majesty
 - Frankincense for His divinity
 - Myrrh for His humility
 - But Herod, the politician, was not interested in any of this, he simply wanted to have this potential usurper killed
 - Which is just what he tried to do when the Magi did not return to him
 - *V. 16 - When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.*
- Why did Herod feel that he had to do this?
 - Because in those days, one of the first things a king did was eliminate anyone who may later rise up in an effort to take the throne from him

- Herod would do anything not to lose control
- Was Herod's response really that much different from what many people today are doing?
 - I don't mean the killing part – but maintaining control
 - For many, it is the very reason they are not willing to surrender their lives to Jesus
 - Even Christians must be aware of this as many will partially surrender
 - The right words might be said, even many of the right things done, but they don't want Jesus to come in and “mess up their lives”
 - That was what concerned Herod, he wanted to keep things just the way they were, the way he wanted them to be
- There is also another group of men in this story who you might have missed but would be present in Jesus' for the next 33 years
 - V. 4-6 - *When Herod had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “But 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 shepherd my people Israel.”*
 - Who were the chief priests? – they were the temple ministers in charge of worship
 - Who were the teachers of the law? – the scribes and those who kept and made copies of and enforced the Scripture
 - What was the collective name of these men? – they were the Pharisees
 - The same men who had all the knowledge of the Scriptures, but who would fight Jesus every step of His ministry because they did, too, did not want to lose control
- What about you this morning, as we begin to anticipate the Christmas season of 2020?
 - What of your relationship with Jesus Christ are you missing because you have to maintain control?
- Therein lies the real difference between the men of wisdom and the man of politics
 - All Herod wanted was to maintain control
 - The Magi were willing to travel to a place without really knowing what they would find, but knowing that it was not within their control
- Let this be the Christmas season where you lose control
 - Better yet, let this be the Christmas season where you surrender control
 - Surrender your will, your wants, your plans, your desires
 - Surrender your relationships, your possessions, your job
 - Surrender your pride, your emotions, and your future
- Let this be the time when you earnestly and truthfully pray the words that Jesus would one day pray, some 33 years later, *“Not my will, but Your will be done!”*