



Better Than Kings

Matthew 2:1-12

Traditional Service
(Saturday, 5:00 p.m.)

Prelude
Call to Worship
Worship through Praise
Worship through Giving
Worship in Music
Doxology
Worship through Fellowship
Scripture Reading
Preparatory Hymn
Worship in the Word
Pastor Larry Pabiona
Response Hymn
Benediction

Sunday English Services*
(10:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.)

Prelude
Call to Worship
Worship through Praise
Worship through Fellowship
Worship through Giving
Worship in Music
Scripture Reading
Worship in the Word
Pastor Larry Pabiona
Benediction

23/24 December 2017
Vol. 39, No. 52

There will be no Christmas Service on Monday, December 25.



Better Than Kings

Today's Message

(23/24 December 2017) /

Matthew 2:1-12

THE WISE MEN
“WORSHIPED”
JESUS. AS THE
FULL IDENTITY OF
JESUS DAWNED
ON THEM, THEY
PROBABLY
REALIZED THIS
BOY IS NOT ONLY
“KING OF THE
JEWS,” BUT THE
SON OF GOD—
IMMANUEL
HIMSELF, WORTHY
OF WORSHIP.

You probably know that one of the amusing misconceptions about Christmas is because of the carol that sings, “We Three Kings, of orient are.” First, there were three gifts, but no mention of how many actually visited Jesus with those gifts. Most of all, they weren’t kings. But what many people don’t know is that in a good sense, these wise men were doing something far better than being earthly kings. They honored the King of kings. And because they did, they teach us about themselves and about us. They show us the way:

1. WHO ARE THEY, AND WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? (V. 1)

- The word Matthew used is derived from *Magos*, a Persian word denoting a priestly caste, but also used for interpreters of astrological signs or dreams.
 - In Daniel 2, *magoi* appear with the Babylonian enchanters and wise men consulted by Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dream. Acts 13:6–8 describes Elymas as a *magos*.
 - So the *magoi* were likely specialists in dreams and astrological phenomena, as attested by their interpretation of the star. They were “wise men” only in a secular sense; they were definitely not kings.
 - These wise men were probably from Persia (present-day Iran). They came “from the East” (2:1) and “went back to their territory” (2:12). We know little beyond that—but they did not come from “the Orient” (East Asia) as we call it today.

2. HOW DID THEY FIND JESUS? (VV. 2, 9)

- Better said, God found them. God knew they were seeking, and came to them through the sign of a star. This same star would guide them all the way to Jesus Himself.

A yellow silhouette illustration of a nativity scene set against a dark blue background with yellow stars. The scene shows Mary kneeling in prayer, Joseph standing with a staff, and the infant Jesus lying in a manger. A bright star shines above the manger. To the left, a donkey and sheep are visible. The entire illustration is rendered in a bright yellow color.

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- When people's hearts are hungry for the truth, and their hearts are open to it, God reveals Himself to them (*John 4:23*). The question always is, are their hearts really open to the truth? What we often see today is the opposite (*Romans 1:18-22*).
3. WHAT WAS HEROD'S CONCERN IN ALL THIS? (VV. 3-8)
- This paranoid king wanted to kill all comers. But he wasn't alone in his blindness. The irony is the eagerness of the Magi to worship Jesus despite limited knowledge, in contrast to the apathy of the religious leaders and the hostility of Herod's court—all of whom had the Scriptures to inform them. Israel's leaders who knew the Scriptures (*Matthew 2:6*) wanted nothing to do with the "star arising from Jacob" (*Numbers 24:17*).
 - It is well said that it's not what you know that saves you; it is often what condemns you. The Bible always makes clear that knowledge is a means to an end, not an end to itself. You can be a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge, and miss heaven by 9 inches—the average size of the human brain.
4. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WISE MEN IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY? (VV. 11, 12)
- These things are good to know: they came to a *house*, not a *stable*; and they came to a *child*, not a *baby*. But here's what's crucial to realize: they worshiped Him! When the wise men worship, they hint at what *Matthew 28:16-20* later makes obvious: Jesus is not just Israel's king, but their king, possessing authority over all nations.
 - Christmas anticipates death; the myrrh points to the cross (*Mark 15:23*) and tomb (*John 19:39*). Israel would eventually reject Jesus as Savior-King. You can't separate Christmas from the cross, ever.
 - It is pagan Gentiles—perhaps from a nation that had held Israel captive, who got the Scriptures right and welcomed the true King. The wonder of Christmas is that God can use even pagan astrologers to inaugurate the worship of the world's divine King. This is good news for lost sinners in our day.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The wise men "worshiped" Jesus (*Matthew 2:11*). As the full identity of Jesus dawned on them, they probably realized this boy is not only "king of the Jews," but the Son of God—Immanuel himself, worthy of worship. Will you see them in heaven? I'm sure we will.

The Bible says, "The fool says in his heart—there is no God!" (*Psalms 14:1*). Today, the wise still worship Him. Let the Magi show us the way ■

Dear GCF,

Once again the Great Giver has beaten us all in gift-giving. He gave GCF all of these gifts. Praise God!

CHRISTMAS DECORS

If you noticed the beautiful Christmas decorations not just in the lobby but all throughout the building, there has been a wonderful recent innovation that really inspires us to worship. The names of God are prominently displayed and this has blessed many as they realize this is the One to whom their souls are attached to eternally. For all these decorations, which you know took a lot of hard work and tender loving care, we thank again the lovely ladies of the Joy Women, led in this effort by Lily Cheng, Bel Estrada, and their officers. We also thank Beth Salustiano and other volunteers who partnered with them in making our church so lovely for this season.

SENIORS' CHOIR

I praise God for how our Seniors ministry has really taken off. Akouo, the use of the Seniors room, their fellowships, retreats, and the Seniors' Choir have been very active now. We particularly appreciate their energy as they joined the younger generations to sing in the Cantata last weekend. They remind me so well of Psalm 92:14-

15: "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The LORD is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him." Special thanks to Bettylyn Rendal, Pastor Sam's better half, for how she has sacrificially given her talents to lead the Seniors' Choir.

THE WONDERFUL CANTATA LAST WEEKEND

We thank God for the Festival Chorale, which is the combined singing groups of the church, from the Praise Factory all the way to the Senior Choir, and all ages and singing groups in between! They couldn't have pulled it off without our Orchestra playing, and our Production crew working behind the scenes. But our sovereign God made all their efforts worth it. Here are the results for our thanksgiving, and with these, our prayers also for good follow-up:

- 51 first-time GCF guests
- 101 prayed to receive Christ
- 73 indicated they want to know more about Christ
- 543 indicated they want to become a member of GCF

All glory to God, the Giver of all good and perfect gifts.

Merry Christmas! ■

Ablaze Devotional

And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord. - Luke 1:45 (ESV)

The encounter of Mary and Elizabeth shows us the beauty of a community that affirms the work of God. We see how both lives reflect full confidence in the promises God proclaimed to them. Both experienced a miracle that brought hope, not just for themselves, but hope for all the nations. The rescue, relief and release that a people in despair and oppression has now come to its fulfillment. YHWH, whose name means presence, has come to dwell with His people.

May the faith of Elizabeth and Mary be a witness to our hearts. Today, let us incline our ears to the wonderful name of Jesus, Immanuel. As we do, may our souls leap for joy with Elizabeth, for the Lord has come and moved in with us. May our hearts sing and declare with Mary about the redemptive work of the Lord. We receive God's salvation that overthrows the powers of sin and oppression, that shines light to those who are in darkness.

Let us remember our Savior's birth by affirming one another. Let us be a voice of relief and comfort to those who are in need. Let us pray for opportunities on how we can open our doors to our neighbor. Just as God has blessed us, may we be a blessing to those around us—affirming and journeying with people who still await for God's redemptive work in their lives. To our families, and community, let us become voices of joy and peace ■

GCF PRAYER GATHERINGS AT THE CHAPEL:

The GCF Hour of Prayer
Tuesdays, 6-7 a.m.

Midweek Prayer Service
Wednesdays, 7-8:30 p.m.

Ministry Opportunities + Other Announcements



Praise God! Last week, at our Special Christmas Services, God blessed us with

- 51** first-time GCF guests
- 101** who prayed to receive Christ
- 73** who want to know more about Christ
- 543** who want to become a member of GCF

Let us continuously pray that the Lord would guide the follow-up efforts.

CHRISTMAS' AND NEW YEAR'S WEEKEND SERVICES SCHEDULE

December 30 (Saturday): 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.
December 24 & 31 (Sunday, **two services only**):
10:00 to 11:30 a.m. *and* 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

2018 PRAYER JOURNAL

A 40-day prayer journey to GCF's 40th Anniversary
All GCFers are invited to join in this journey of prayer (and fasting), as we move closer to our church's 40th Anniversary. Please visit the booth at the lobby to get your **free** copy of the journal.

Would you like to read our weekly church bulletin on your mobile device? Just sign-up with your e-mail address at the Ministry Information Booth at the lobby and we will send it to you.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

December 2017

	December Budget	Received, Dec. 1-20
General	8,126,504	6,105,680
Missions	825,500	1,197,080

	Jan. - Dec. Budget	Received, Jan. to Dec.
General	99,974,570	80,411,974
Missions	9,906,000	10,644,873

Flower Ministry

The flowers this week are given with praise and thanksgiving to God for His love, mercy grace, faithful provisions, blessings and good health from Mrs. Dienzo, the Basilad family, the Valera family, and the Messiah College. The flowers are also given in memory of the 6th death anniversary of Mimat Licayan.

Please call 632 1354 to 56 for inquiries on how to participate in this ministry.



Love God, love others.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Alyssa Ang knew that she would eventually go back to school to pursue a master's degree. It was a seedling that grew with the help of a short-term missions trip, as well as serving full-time in our church. Earlier this year, she voiced this desire to God and prayed for an opportunity to better equip herself in ministering to Missionary Kids and Third Culture Kids.



Serving in the church was familiar to Alyssa, having grown up in the Youth Ministry. She just didn't think that she would be a ministry assistant or even that she would be a seminary student. The paths that the Lord has set for His people are far more interesting and colorful than the ones they plan for themselves—if only they submit to Him. She is grateful, then, to God for her experience working in GCF, learning what it means to be both His daughter and His servant.

The Lord called His people to love Him and their neighbors. While it certainly isn't easy to do, she continues to learn to choose love despite its challenges. So as Alyssa enters seminary, she hopes to learn how to love Him better that she may help His children feel grounded in His love ■

You may also bless others by sharing your own shepherding or discipleship journey in loving God and in loving others. You may e-mail your story to lifejourney@gcf.org.ph.

ON THE COVER: View of a neighborhood in present-day Bethlehem in the West Bank, a territory disputed by Israel and the Palestinian Authority (pixabay.com). *Pray for:* Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem and the larger West Bank and Gaza Strip regions. Pray that our Lord of peace would protect them even as violence has been forcing them to move out of the region. Pray also that Christmas pilgrims to Bethlehem would center on discovering Christ and the true meaning of His birth.

Join a GROWTH GROUP

HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE Y-GROUP

Sundays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., and 4:30-5:30 p.m.

At GCF (Youth Center, 6th flr.)

ICU (Intimacy Care Unit) GG

for Couples aged 30 up

Saturdays, 4-6 p.m. at GCF (Rm. A109)

GREEN MEADOWS GG

for Couples aged 40 up

Every other Thursday, 8-10 p.m.

at Green Meadows Subdivision

NEW GG (GATHERING CONTACTS)

for Single Men and Women aged 21-30

Tentatively scheduled on Sundays,

3-5 p.m. at GCF

YACIES TUESDAY GG

for Single Men and Women aged 30 up

Tuesdays, 7-10 p.m. at GCF (Rm. BM07)

SPORTS GGs (THREE GROUPS)

for Boys aged 11 to 18

Saturdays, 12 nn.-3 p.m. at GCF Multi-purpose Gym (6th flr.)

Pass by the GGEX (Growth Group Express)!

Sundays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Room B123

Get a feel of what a Growth Group is like before you participate in one. Come and join us!

If you are interested in joining any of the small groups above, fill out the tear-off form inside this bulletin, drop it in the offering bag or submit it to the Growth Group booth at the lobby. For more information, you can text or call us at 0917 532 7740.



Greenhills Christian Fellowship

Know Christ and Make Him Known

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Mobile No. 0920 961 2964, Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

E-mail: email@gcf.org.ph • Website: www.gcf.org.ph

God's Way to Heaven

THE GOSPEL

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is holy and righteous: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). **He requires holiness of us as well:** "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN

Man is sinful: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
Sin demands a penalty: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST

Christ is the expression of God's love for us: "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). **Christ paid the penalty of our sins and died for sinners:** "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18). **Through Christ, God offers man reconciliation:** "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

PRAYER: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I believe that you died on the cross in my place, to save me from my sins, and I accept you as my Savior, and the Master of my life forever. Amen.*

Need someone to talk to?

Visit the Emmaus Road Counseling Center at the GCF Mezzanine floor or contact 632 1354 to 56, 635 0078 to 80 or 0917 532 7794 for inquiries.

How may we SERVE YOU BETTER?

Fill-out this tear off form and drop it in an offering bag/box or at the Ministry Information Booth. Please check all that is applicable:

- I am a first-time guest.
- I prayed to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord today.
- I would like to know how to become a Christian.
- I am interested in becoming a member of this church.
- I want to join a Growth Group.**
(Specify age group: _____)
(Specify group composition: _____)
- I want to start a Growth Group.
- I want to host a Growth Group.

Please share with us some information about yourself:

Name: _____
Age: ____ Landline no.: _____
Mobile no.: _____
Address: _____

E-mail: _____
Year of membership: _____
Name of Growth Group (if you already have one): _____

*Today is **23/24 December 2017**, and I attended the 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. (Sat) (encircle the time).*

Write below *any* inquiry or prayer item that you want to ask or share.

For hospital or house visitation, dedication service, or funeral service requests, please call or text 0917 532 7794.