

**Message: Know God's Love**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Look Up Sermon Series**  
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It's unfortunate that science and faith have been pitted against each other. While science and faith are two different disciplines, they do not have to be contentious. The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19). Humans have a special place in God's heart (Psalm 8). If we look up to the Lord (Psalm 121), we can encounter the tremendous love of God (Psalm 136). The Bible is so interesting. Rahab, the prostitute, is listed as an example of faith. Humble and lowly shepherds received an angelic visit. Wise men traveled hundreds of miles from the east to bring gifts in worship to the newborn King. Ironically, the only one in the story who refuses to look up is the most rich, famous and powerful person in the narrative – King Herod. Herod looked down on and despised a potential rival. Trapped by trying to establish his own kingdom, Herod completely missed the greatest moment in human history: God becoming a human being. Herod, a liar and murderer, was hateful and hated. Herod reminds me of Paul's description of how humans respond to God (we make God into our enemy). It is sad when we close our hearts to the "but" in Ephesians 2:4-7: *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

**APPLICATION:** God's love is available for all people. All we need to do is look up to Him to receive Jesus. There are two questions to ask this week: "Will you pray for children at VBS to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior?" This message of the wise men finding Christ will be the scripture used when the gospel is presented to our VBS kids. Second, when we find Christ, we *"rejoice exceedingly with great joy."* How's your "joy factor?"

Look for 4 individuals/groups in our story. Jesus, the wise men, King Herod, the people of Jerusalem, Chief priests.

**Matthew 2:1-12**

*Now after **Jesus** was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, **wise men** from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, "Where is he who*

*has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."* <sup>3</sup> When **Herod** the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the **chief priests and scribes** of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." <sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup> And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Begin with the good news, Jesus. Now after **Jesus** was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king Jesus came to us while we were "dead" in our sins. Jesus = God who has come to us in human form because we were lost. We needed a savior. The last word of the Old Testament is literally "curse" (NIV) or the last 2 words in the ESV: "utter destruction." Jesus came to redeem us from utter destruction and the curse. We cannot do that ourselves. This is His story.

3 groups/individuals mentioned:

1.) The **wise men** – likely from Persia, were literally "Looking Up." When they found what they were looking for, they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." They "*fell down and worshiped*" Jesus (who had not done anything yet). His only credentials were written in the sky. They knew how to "read the signs" and knew what to do. Jesus fussed at the religious leaders when He said, you can read the weather, but you can't read the signs of the times (Matthew 16:1-4). They presented Him with gifts. We should see how God is at work all around us, yet we can easily miss what He is doing. Perhaps we need to give thanks more often; marvel at His creation ("signs"). Our Psalm readings this week in the Sermon Journal point in this direction. We should give thanks ("Eucharist"), which is

another reason for us to celebrate Holy Communion. We need to engage with Jesus, worship Him and bring Him our gifts.

2.) Contrasted with the wise men, the local **chief priests & scribes** didn't pay attention. They ignored and were indifferent to the most wonderful thing in the history of the world that happened in their own backyard. Why would they not go with the wise men to investigate this Messianic appearance? Why so passive? Those who should have responded (the religious leaders) seemed to shrug it off. How is this possible? They weren't "evil"— they were just absent and pre-occupied. Greek word for "wise" = "**sophos**" + Greek word for "fools" = "**moros**." "**Sophomores**" get their names because they've learned some things but are still only beginners. "**Freshmen**" know they are new – sophomores have 1 yr of experience. We see them in the workplace when they graduate from college & think they should be CEO. They don't know how much they don't know. They are "**wise fools**." They run together & feed off each other. They are not "evil" but are not "**wise**" yet, either. They could go either way.

3.) **Herod** = the king of Judea. Every interesting story has a bad guy. The Bible has many villains: #1 is Satan. But Genesis 3 tells of Cain murdering his brother. There's Pharaoh, Ahab & Jezebel & Haman. There is a long list. Herod makes my top 10 list. He tried to murder the messiah. He was called "The Great" as the remains of some of his building projects can still be seen 2,000 years later. He was very troubled. He was a cruel murderer and liar. He suffered from paranoia. "*If momma ain't happy....*" so, all Jerusalem was troubled too. Herod's inquiring mind wanted to know about the potential rival, so he asked the religious leaders.

Dr. Henry Cloud, in his book, "Necessary Endings," describes 3 types of people.

1.) **Wise**. They listen and receive feedback. They thank you for it. They take responsibility. They show remorse when they are wrong. They learn and make changes. They are rational, not emotional. They try to solve problems. We want to cultivate time with wise people.

*1 Kings 4:29-30 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. (A gift of God)*

*Deuteronomy 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. (We need others to help make us wise.)*

James 3:13-18 *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.* The 2 goals of life = become a wise person. (We need others to help make us wise.) Have people you can share your wisdom with. (2 types of Wisd) 2 goals of life = develop wisdom + relationships to share it.

2.) **Fool.** The opposite of a wise person. They are unaware or unmotivated. They do not take responsibility. They blame others. They shoot the messenger. It's never their fault. They make excuses. They minimize, rationalize, and get emotional. They do not learn. They won't change. They are always a victim. They divide the world into two parts – those who agree with them and those who don't.

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, BUT a wise man listens to advice.*

Luke 12:20-21 *But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, & the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself & is not rich toward God."*

We're wasting your time with a fool.

3.) **Evil.** They seek to destroy. Divisive. Unreasonable. You'd better protect yourself from them (*You can communicate with me through my lawyer.*) Maybe the fear of Herod is why the scribes & Pharisees were so passive. There seems to be a lot of foolish/evil behavior today. There always has been.

John 3:19-20 *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.*

Ephesians 5:15-18 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

We don't read the stars to determine God's will. But how do we become spiritual wise to discern God's will?

**Wesleyan Quadrilateral ILL.**

Scripture. (Vaughn Story's Class)

Tradition. (Church— others are imperfect; so are we. Do not isolate Build relationships)

Reason. (Think)

Experience. Wise people know – we can be wise about one thing and foolish about another. Furthermore, we can become evil, too. Are we on our way to becoming Wise, Foolish or Evil? We can also be wise/foolish/evil all in one day. Do I ever think, "I'm foolish?"

1 Corinthians 1:26-30 *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*

Jesus came so we could Look Up and find His grace. There is a better way. Wise men/women Look Up & find the Risen Christ.