

I'll Be Home For Christmas – “The East” **Matthew 2:1-12**

Last week we started this new sermon series “I'll Be Home For Christmas,” where we are looking at different cities/locations surrounding the birth of Jesus, & imagining what it might've been like to be home there for the holidays.

Last week we looked at “Jerusalem,” the city that didn't recognize Jesus, & rejected Him as “God with us!” Some of us know what it's like to have family who reject Jesus... & have gatherings that are antagonistic to Him...

What could it look like being in a “Jerusalem-like” home for Christmas this year, and represent the love and presence of Jesus there?

Today we are looking at the place where the magi, those who came to visit Jesus in Bethlehem (not in the manger but much later), called home!

Scripture tells us that they came from “the East.” But scholars aren't sure of the exact location... Most likely they came from Persia, Babylon or Arabia.

We may not know for sure the “where”, but we do have insights into “what” they did, and from there we can imagine what it might've been like to celebrate Christmas at home with those who are a lot like these “magi”.

What do we know about the magi from Scripture and tradition:

- They were wise, intelligent, scholars... but mostly in the secular sense.
 - They were searching for truth... but their heads were in the clouds.
 - They were far from Jesus (in terms of distance, covenant, relationship).
 - They connected the dots intellectually, before they stepped towards Jesus.
 - But once that connection was made, they had undeterred resolve.
- It was their pursuit of truth in the secular world that led to Jesus.
 - Yes, they came late to the party, but they came most prepared.
 - They revealed things about Jesus' identity that most people missed.
 - Despite its unlikeliness, God used them in a very big way in His story.

Do we have people in our lives, at our family Christmas gatherings, that are like these magi... Does seeing where the magi's journey ended up, give us hope for those in our families, who most closely resemble them, today?

- If one of your family members is so intellectually driven that it's hard for them to accept the things of faith... there's hope! All truth is God's truth and truth will lead to the One who is “the Truth!” **John 14:6**

God can use the knowledge of stars to lead a person to Jesus!

- If one of your family members is completely secular and far from God, consider these Gentile magi, from the East, who God brought across the desert to encounter His Son, Jesus!

No one is ever too far to be brought near to Jesus, by God's leading!

- If one of your family members is highly unlikely to show up to worship Jesus this Christmas... be patient... it might take some time... but if God can bring the magi to bow before Jesus, he can do the same for them!
- When God draws those furthest away to Himself... He, & He alone, receives the greatest glory! And don't we proclaim, along with the angels at Christmas, “*Glory to God in the Highest...*” Let's continue to!

God is most glorified when the wisdom of this world bows before the seemingly foolishness, & weakness, of God! **1 Corinthians 1:25**

May we never lose sight of the fact that a few secular, Gentile, star-gazing, intellectually-driven, magi, living far from the center of God's redemptive plan... were the ones God made a focal point in the story of Jesus' advent!

For those who've spent time in their lives far from God, when God brings them near, they often respond with the greatest fervor of faith!

So picture your family at home for Christmas this year... Who is missing... or who is there but far from God... Who is caught up in the secular things of today and is therefore not interested in the true meaning of Christmas?

Pray that God would make them “wise men...” this Christmas! & dare to believe that in God's timing (even if it takes years), they will come to worship Jesus too!