**ARE YOU WISE OR RELIGIOUS?**

Christmas Services 2023

**FUNNY – A lady was driving around and around for 30 minutes at the mall looking for a parking spot, and she just couldn’t find one. She was in a big hurry, so she looked up and prayed, “Lord, if you’ll give me a parking spot, I’ll go to church every Sunday for the rest of my life, I’ll cook my husband dinner every night and I’ll even rub his feet.” Just then, miraculously, a car pulled out of a parking space right in front of her. So she looked back up and said, “Never mind Lord, I found one.”**

**GRANDPARENT FUNNY – 90-YR OLD GRANDMOTHER… SHOPPING TOO TAXING… Sat & wrote checks to all family & friends, and in the cards, “Buy your own present.” After festivities were over, she found the whole pile of checks… forgot to insert them… all received empty cards saying, “Buy your own present.”**

**GRANDPARENT FUNNY – PAY ATTENTION TO CARDS YOU BUY… Lady in rush sent 49/50 pack… “Just a note to say, a little gift is on it’s way.”**

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**MY EXPERIENCE AT (FIVE GUYS) TODAY... I ORDERED A SINGLE PATTY BACON CHEESEBURGER... A SMALL FRIES... AND A SMALL DRINK... AND THE TOTAL WAS $24.86 ?!?! AND THEN... THE MACHINE ASKED IF I WANTED TO LEAVE A TIP... SO I LEFT A TIP FOR THE PERSON TAKING MY ORDER.**

**THE TITLE OF MY MESSAGE IS...**

**ARE YOU WISE OR RELIGIOUS?**

**I WANT TO READ TWO PORTIONS OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY AND PUT THEM IN CONTEXT. THEN, I WANT TO ASK YOU THIS QUESTION: WHICH ONE ARE YOU IN THIS STORY? THE WISE OR THE RELIGIOUS?**

**Matthew 1:18–25 (NLT)** This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. **19** Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. **20** As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. **21** And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” **22** All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: **23** “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’ ” **24** When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. **25** But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

**FUNNY – When Jonathan was a little boy, being raised in this “video generation,” he said, “Dad, is the Bible based on a true story?”**

**LOOK AGAIN AT VERSE 23...**

**Matthew 1:23 (NLT)** “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him **Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’ ”**

**WHAT DOES THAT MEAN... GOD IS WITH US?**

**IT MEANS THAT THE CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH SAW THAT HUMANKIND HAD BECOME SINFUL AND WAS HEADED TOWARD ETERNAL DESTRUCTION... AND OUT OF HIS LOVE FOR THEM, HE HUMBLED HIMSELF TO BECOME ONE OF THEM... A HUMAN... SO THAT HE COULD DIE IN THEIR PLACE, TAKING THE PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR SINS.**

**Philippians 2:5–8 (NLT)** You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. **6** Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. **7** Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, **8** he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.

**Galatians 1:3–4 (NKJV)** Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

**John 1:10–12 (NKJV)** **[Jesus]** was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. **11** He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. **12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

**HERE’S THE POINT... THE ETERNAL GOD WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO COME TO US... TO BECOME ONE OF US... TO DIE FOR US... TO OFFER US FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE WITH HIM... AND HE’S WAITING TO HEAR OUR ANSWER. WILL WE ACCEPT HIS FORGIVENESS IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR SINFUL LIVES? OR WILL WE CHOOSE TO IGNORE HIS LOVE AND GREAT SACRIFICE AND DO AS WE PLEASE?**

**NOW LET ME READ THE SECOND PART OF THE STORY...**

**Matthew 2:1–11 (NLT)** 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, **2** **“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”** **3** **King Herod was deeply disturbed** when he heard this, as was **everyone in Jerusalem**. **4** He called a meeting of the **leading priests and teachers of religious law** and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” **5** “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: **6** ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’ ” **7** Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. **8** Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And **when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!**” **9** 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. **10** When they saw the star, **they were filled with joy**! **11** They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and **they bowed down** and **worshiped him**. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST AND HEROD... AND THE PRIESTS AND TEACHERS... AND FROM ALL JERUSALEM. MOST PEOPLE KNEW WHAT THE BIBLE SAID... BUT THEY DIDN’T BELIEVE IT ENOUGH TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.**

**BOTTOM LINE: THEY WEREN’T SPIRITUALLY HUNGRY OR THIRSTY.**

**UNLESS YOU’RE HUNGRY FOR GOD, YOU WON’T DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO RECEIVE WHAT HE’S OFFERING.**

**LISTEN TO...**

**Isaiah 55:1 (ESV)** “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

**JESUS HAS ALREADY PAID THE PRICE... BUT WE NEED TO BE HUNGRY ENOUGH FOR GOD TO STOP LIVING OUR OWN LIVES AS WE PLEASE AND FOLLOW HIM.**

**JESUS LOVES US... AND WANTS US TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER.**

**John 14:2–3 (NKJV)** In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

**TODAY... JESUS IS SENDING OUT HIS INVITATION TO YOU. LISTEN TO A PARABLE JESUS TOLD IN LUKE 14...**

**EX – Gospel cut my heart… forever changed… forever saved**

**OVER 8 BILLION PEOPLE… GOSPEL CAME TO YOUR EARS/HEART. THAT CONCEPT ALONE SHOULD OVERWHELM US… RECEIVED SUCH AN ETERNAL GIFT.**

**Luke 14:16–24 (NKJV)** Then **[Jesus]** said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, **17** and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ **18** But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ **19** And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ **20** Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ **21** So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ **22** And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ **23** Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. **24** For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’ ”

**SO WHICH ARE YOU? THE WISE MEN WHO DROPPED EVERYTHING TO FIND JESUS? OR THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO ONLY WANTED TO KNOW THE STORY BUT DIDN’T HAVE TIME FOR JESUS IN THEIR BUSY LIVES?**

**LISTEN TO WHAT JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES – AND TO US – WHEN HE SENT THEM TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT SALVATION THROUGH HIM...**

**Luke 10:10–11 (NKJV)** But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, **11** ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’

**FRIENDS... LET ME TELL YOU... THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR TO YOU TODAY... GOD WANTED TO TELL YOU CLEARLY TODAY THAT HE LOVES YOU... AND THAT HE WANTS YOU TO REPENT OF YOUR SINS... RECEIVE HIS SALVATION... AND TO FOLLOW JESUS.**

**John 3:16 (NKJV)** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

**EX – MY TESTIMONY**

**ALTAR CALL**

* Sinner’s Prayer
* Call to Baptism
* GIVE US A YEAR!
* **Christmas Eve Services NEXT WEEKEND**