

**Christ Presbyterian Church**  
**Edina, Minnesota**  
**December 17 & 18, 2016**  
**John Crosby**  
**The Wonder of His Blessing | Luke 1**

So, in these next seven days before Christmas we want to invite you to become like a child again. To look around this world that's been created and believe that there's more going on here than the eyes can see. To listen to this story with the amazement of a child and not the story that you've heard a thousand times before. To receive again the gift of wonder. I don't know that there's any place to see wonder more spectacularly etched than in the nighttime sky. Look at that (slide shown). From ancient times the people who have looked at the nighttime sky must have felt like there must be something more. "The heavens declare the glory of God", the psalmist said, and as you look at the sky you feel small. You feel like the God who created all that and makes the planets and the stars move perfectly must be bigger to us than we are to ants. And then you look around, and you wonder *what kind of God could this be* and you hear music like the music we've been hearing this morning and you realize God must have created beauty so that we would believe that beauty is good. That word good is also part of a created order because if there's any truth to this God, then the idea is that we are made in the image of God. And, if we look inside of our hearts—inside of ourselves in our conscious—our conscious declares that there is good and evil and bad and right. So, God must care about what's good and right, and that makes God powerful, and beautiful, and judgmental. That's what you get from creation. It's not until you get to Christmas that you get the idea that God could be present and that God could actually love you. Without Christmas there's no guarantee of God's presence or God's love. If you hear nothing else . . . God is crazy about you! God knows who you are. God cares for you as sure as the heavens are above the earth. It's a wonder.

Another wonder comes when you look at the stars and then you see a star. It focuses your attention the way that it did so long ago. In the Gospel of Matthew it says:

<sup>1</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the one born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." [Matthew 2:1-2]

What's remarkable to me about the wise men is that they see the star. Everybody saw the star. There were no city lights of New York. They all saw this new thing happening, but only the wise men *really* saw the star. They saw it as a sign that there was a God and somehow that God was beckoning to them. I think most of us have a sense that there's something more, that you are made for more; that it's more than just all the things of the earth. The wise men had all the material wealth they could want, but they got on their camels and went hundreds of miles across countries and through deserts

because they wanted something more. The wise men were wise not because they knew they needed more, but because they realized that what they needed was not more of the same. Most of you feel like what you need is more, but it's more of the same. The wise were wise because they realized they needed more of something different that they couldn't buy at the store. And they saw that it must be some hunger inside themselves that couldn't be satisfied with some sale. They were like Solomon, the wisest man. Solomon said,

<sup>11</sup> God has made everything beautiful in its time, but God has also put eternity into the human heart; and yet nobody can fathom what God has done from the beginning to the end. [Ecclesiastes 3:11]

What that means is that you will not be satisfied with more of the same because God has put eternity into the human heart. And even if your head forgets because it's got its shopping list, some part of your heart remembers. So the wise men saw the star because they were dissatisfied with just getting more of the same. They had the hope that there might be something different, and that gave them the courage to go on a journey when everybody else just went shopping. They had the courage to hope for more and to follow the star instead of just going home. And so, when we see the star, we have the hope that leads us onto the journey. What makes the wise men truly wise is they realize that because they are more than the stuff of this earth, the stuff of this earth will never be enough. Because you are more than the stuff of this earth, the stuff of this earth will never be enough. And then, they had the humility to know when they'd arrived. Not just a little more, not just another religious experience, not just a feel good, they had the humility to know when they had arrived.

The Gospel of Matthew says:

<sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and they worshiped Him in humility. [Matthew 2:11]

They didn't bring the perfect gift; they found the perfect gift. It's not a mistake. Jesus is not born on Christmas Day so that you can ooohhh and ahhh at the beautiful baby. We have some staff kids and we ooohhh and ahhh with the best of them, but He was born King of the Jews and He was King of the world, and if you're going to come to that, it requires humility. It says when they saw Him they worshiped Him.

I think in the end we don't primarily worship God for what God has done lately. We worship God for who God is, because at last we see God, the real God, and we say *that's what it's talking about*. One of my favorite Christmas carols has a note from the prophet Haggai in it and it says, "The desires of all nations has come." He calls Jesus the desire of all the nations. When the wise men see the baby, they kneel and they say,

“At last! This is the more I was looking for.” The desire of their heart is filled. It says they went home by a different way and their hearts were filled with wonder.

My prayer is that between now and Christmas, you’ll look out and see the stars, and you’ll wonder. You’ll look for one star and you won’t go shopping and you won’t go home—you’ll follow it to the baby king. The children are going to come up and sing again, but first I’d like us to pray.

Lord Jesus, I thank You that You didn’t come with a tank. You didn’t fly over in an airplane. You came in a way that no one could imagine and that no one could mistake. You came not to fill my head, but my heart. At last. The desire of all the nations. Not more the same, but what we really need. Bless us this Christmas. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit we pray. Amen.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.