

Christmas Message Series: Journey to Bethlehem

Theme verse: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Sermon #3: "Christmas on the Move"

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-18

Blurb: Jesus was born far from home, and afterwards the family couldn't even go back home! The Magi arrived, and hot on their heels came the royal soldiers seeking to kill the new baby King. So, in the middle of the night, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled south to Egypt. Christmas is about the peace that God brings during the chaotic journey of life! On Sunday we remember this as the way we begin our new year ahead!

Opening Song: *Thrive*

Welcome: -Pastor David

Merry Christmas! and welcome to Forest Hills Church, where we Love God and others, Grow in our relationship with Jesus, and Serve others powered and led by the Holy Spirit!

My name is David Werner, and I'm the pastor here.

A special welcome to those here for the first time!

We hope you experience God's love and the care of His family here at Forest Hills.

Please stop by the welcome center and get a mug as our gift to you.

We hope your cup runs over with praise and blessings!

We invite kids to stay in worship, as our whole service is intended for all ages.

There is the nursery available, as well as kids' activity bags, and craft table.

Grow Moment:

I also want to ask you to join one of our new small groups starting in January.

-Small groups are a time and place to ask those questions and dig deeper into the Bible. It's about experiencing what we're learning about. Take a look!

Small Group Video

-Sign up sheets are out in the lobby. Sign up for one today! Lots of options!

-New adventure, following HCI

-All groups will be doing the same thing, following the Sunday messages.

-Way to grow spiritually.

-One of our 3 HCI legs of our Jubilee year: Worship, Fellowship, and Nurture.

-Meet weekly for six weeks. Lots of options - see signups!

Memory Verse

Our take-away verse today comes from the middle of the Christmas story. It's about taking a journey at Christmas to go meet Jesus. Christmas is about a journey! Let's try it together:

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Advent Candle

Remember. Rejoice. Renew. Resound! Jesus is born!

Worship Set: - Sanctify

Hosanna

Cornerstone

Where I Belong

Worship prayer - Amanda

Prayer: Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition *UMH#607*

Christmas for Kids

Christmas - Tell the story with the nativity set.

Magi come later, after the star appears, after traveling

Bring 3 gifts: Gold, Frankincense, myrrh

Look and smell

They were strange gifts, but they were what the family NEEDED right at that time!

The gold was money! They could buy what they needed with it!

God gives you what you need to do what God wants.

Gives you money...perhaps give some of your Xmas \$ to help someone?

Gives you abilities to do things...perhaps make a craft for someone.

Gives you Holy Spirit, to guide you and help you.

Pray for HS in 2018.

Serve Moment: Christmas Offering

Community Helping Hand Rental Assistance Program

Offering: -Perry

Bumper Video

Message: "Journey to Bethlehem: Christmas on the Move"

PP#1: Journey to Bethlehem

Christmas on the Move

"Get up. Take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt." Matt. 2:13b

Journey to Bethlehem. Christmas on the Move. Matthew 2:13 "Get up. Take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt."

PP#2: *Image of people looking lost and harried at an airport.*

We've been celebrating Christmas all week! And Christmas has been about chaos and travel! I went to the airport on Wednesday to pick up my mother, who arrived from Florida, where it was 82 degrees, and came to MN, where today it is -40 wind chill! I sat at the airport waiting for her to arrive, and although I knew her flight was delayed, she still didn't come, and didn't come. My mind

fled to all the possibilities: she missed her flight, she never left, something went wrong. And, she didn't have a cell phone. My wife kept texting me, "Do you have her, yet?"

I spent my time thinking about other Christmas conundrums at airports, especially before cell phones. When we were living in England, my brother and sister-in-law came to visit. They were arriving on a certain day and time into London. So, we drove 2 hours to Gatwick Airport, and waited at the gate—yes, back when you could go to the gate—at the arrival from Chicago.

Well, everyone came off the plane, but no brother! We asked the assistants and the flight attendants, nope, no record. We checked and triple checked. We inquired to missing persons. We called back to the US and yes, they had gotten on the flight in Chicago. We walked around the whole airport looking for them. Two hours later, it dawned on us, there were two international airports in London. Maybe we got the airport wrong! We called over to Heathrow. Sure enough, there was a flight that had arrived from Chicago. Drat!

It took us over an hour to get to the other airport. We looked and looked. No brother! We had them paged, missing persons, lost baggage. We would have to drive two hours home and see if they had called. One last try, we called back to Gatwick and asked to have them paged. Within minutes, my brother came on the phone, frantic...*where have I been?*

We finally picked them up 6 hours late! We had to skip all the sightseeing that day! They had flown through Atlanta, and so the international flight was from Atlanta, not Chicago. They had been on time, and we had both been at the right airport six hours earlier.

Then there was the time we drove down to London to pick up my cousin, who actually didn't fly in until the following day!

I also kept thinking about the *Home Alone* movies, too! Airports and Christmas! Christmas is a time of leaving home and ensuing chaos.

Mother, we have bought you at least two cell phones. Please use one!

PP#3: *Image of the magi traveling across the desert.*

The Christmas story we all read in the Bible in Luke, the one about the shepherds, continues on in Matthew. The star that appeared when Jesus was born was noticed by some scientists 800 miles away in present day Iraq. They knew that a new king had been born to the Jews, a very special king. So, they set off to pay homage.

Now, they didn't have cell phones, or GPSs, or even maps. So they headed to the capital of the Jewish people. It probably took them some months to get there, crossing the desserts of the Middle East. They finally get to Jerusalem, and they start asking around: "Where is the new king that has been born to the Jews?"

People give them blank looks. It's confusion. It's chaos. They've left home because of Christmas, and no one knows what they are talking about! King? Go ask at the palace! King Herod gives the same response. New king? What! Crazy talk. And all of Jerusalem is in chaos.

PP#4: Matthew 2:1-15 (CEB)

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. 2 They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him.

Let's read the story. Matthew 2. "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea

during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.” When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him.”

There is chaos and turmoil all through Jerusalem! No new babies in the palace! Finally, someone has the bright idea that maybe they were talking about the promised messiah-king from the Scriptures.

PP#5: Matthew 2:1-15 (CEB)

4 [Herod] gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote: “You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel.”[Micah 5:2]

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.”

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That’s what he said—told them—but he was tricking them. Sometime read the end of this chapter, and you’ll see why.

Well, they have basic directions: go to Bethlehem. But that’s all. How are they going to find the child? They are on a quest, shared from God by a star in the sky. They *even stopped and asked directions!* (This is why we call them *wise men!*) But they really don’t know where they are going. They cannot find their way. Then miraculously, the star *reappears* leading their way! Verse 9...

PP#6: Matthew 2:1-15 (CEB)

9 When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood 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 Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored Him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

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PP#7: Magi presenting the presents to a toddler-looking Jesus.

This Christmas we've been noticing how Christmas is a journey. Christmas is not about being home, it's about going! God left heaven, and in Jesus showed up on earth as a baby. Mary and Joseph left home, the shepherds leave to go find Jesus. The magi, head out on a cross-country journey.

Christmas reminds Jesus-seekers that living for God means you're *always* on the move. We are called to leave home, comfort, leave behind the way we want things, our tidy, self-directed lives, and instead join Jesus on a journey. It's about entering the chaos, about letting your routine get messed up, agreeing to get lost from your plans. Christmas reminds us that from the very beginning, God sends people on His salvation plan.

Think about Mary and Joseph. They are sent by God and Roman politics, from their homes in Nazareth down to Bethlehem. There, Jesus is born. Now, probably, Joseph thinks it is wise to stay there a while. Let Mary recover and heal. So, perhaps after Jesus is born, Joseph is able to locate some of his extended relatives, and they stay with them for a while. Perhaps they got married in Bethlehem. That way they could avoid the judgement of scandal in their home town. Perhaps Joseph earns his keep by temping as a carpenter in Bethlehem (they have to save up money for the trip back). Things settle down, and life begins to get normal. Perhaps Mary makes some friends, and Joseph, too. Weeks slip to months.

So, after all the chaos of Christmas, life starts to calm down for the Holy Family. They go from a stable to stable.

Then, suddenly, one night, in come strange magi from a far-off place, presenting strange gifts! And in with them comes chaos again! Let's go back to the story. Verse 13.

PP#8: Matthew 2:1-15 (CEB)

13 When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him." 14 Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. 15 He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I have called my son out of Egypt.

"When the magi had departed, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him.' So, Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother [and fled] to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I have called my son out of Egypt.

PP#9: Journey to Bethlehem: Christmas on the Move

1. Go! When God Shows

Just as they are getting settled, off they flee—in the middle of the night. The Bethlehem journey continues *because of* Bethlehem!

Christmas—the journey to Bethlehem that we've all taken this year—is a calling to a life of adventure. It's being open to a plan that only God can see. It's being willing to give up a life of settled predictability and personal comfort and being in charge. It's saying "yes" when God says, "Go."

We are facing a new year. On this New Year's Eve, we look back and look forward. We made decisions about how we face the future. And because we are still in Christmas, and because we are Christmas Christians, and because Christmas is not about being home, but about being sent, I want to urge you to decide right now, on this New Year's Eve, to say "Yes!" when God says go! Make it your pre-determined openness, your willed stance, your commitment to be open. Choose now to be ready, so when God shows up, or shows you a star...when God shows, you'll go.

PP#10: Journey to Bethlehem: Christmas on the Move

1. Go! When God Shows
2. God will fund your journey

Now, it's important that the gifts the magi bring are fitting for the true Messiah. Gold: Jesus is king. Frankincense: Jesus is God. Myrrh: Jesus will die as a sacrifice. But what I find incredibly amazing is that the other very important thing these gifts are, is that they are *extremely valuable*. What purpose would they serve? What could Mary and Joseph do with these gifts? They could fund an emergency trip to Egypt! Did you know that Egypt was one of the biggest users of frankincense and myrrh at that time? Both were used for mummification!

God called them on this crazy, unforeseen journey, but God provided for them so they could! God does that! God provides what you need to live the chaotic life of a Christmas Christians! In the year ahead, God will provide the way. It may not be in ways you expect—imagine Mary first receiving frankincense and myrrh!—but it will come. What has God already given into your life, preparing you for your adventure in 2018? God provides what you need. You've got to trust as you go.

PP#11: Journey to Bethlehem: Christmas on the Move

1. Go! When God Shows
2. God will fund your journey
3. Jesus will be your peace

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He is born to bring peace on earth. And Mary and Joseph grip the Prince of Peace as they flee in the middle of the night. They have Peace as they go, literally. Soldiers were riding towards Bethlehem bent on murder. Christmas was full of chaos! But Mary and Joseph carried Peace as they ran. God was looking out for them. God warns them, sends them on. This journey, although high stress, was also for their safety, their good.

If you commit to going when God shows, you will find that God not only will fund your journey, He will also give you peace as you go. Jesus will go with you. You just have to hang on to Him. You will have inner peace, no matter what is happening around you. You can have confidence in 2018, because you have the Prince of Peace in your heart.

This church has begun a new adventure with our Jubilee year. It may be kind of crazy, but we have to go when God shows. We trust God will fund our journey. And we have peace—Jesus—as we go.

PP#12: *A couple embracing in joy at an airport, subtitled, Happy New Year!*

My mother finally showed up at baggage claim, long after everyone else was there. Because she needed assistance, she was the last off the plane. I found her talking and joking with an assistant. The person she had flown with came over and talked about how fun it was to visit with my mother

the whole way. In that stress and chaos of the Christmas airport, there was peace. In the background I saw two people embrace with tear-filled eyes of joy, and I was reminded of the joy of safe arrivals.

Peace washed over me as I saw again what was really important. And I leaned in to greet my smiling mother...happy to have arrived in the cold.

I pray this year, we would be carriers of God's peace, as we journey into the chaos and the cold. May we make new friends, and brighten the lives of those around us. God will take care of us, and will fund our way. We just need to be willing to go.

Happy New Year!

Amen.

Closing Song: *For All that You Have Done* - Sanctify

Announcements: Monday, Office closed
Wed. M&M Potluck & Board Games

Memory Verse: -Pastor David

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him.” -Matthew 2:2

Benediction: -David

Ch@Home

Memory Verse:

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and we have come to worship Him." -Matthew 2:2

Read: Matthew 2:1-18

Reflect: Reflect back on the adventures God has led you on in the past year, and then the past few years. In what specific ways has God provided all you needed for each of them?

Discuss: How does your faith help you have peace as you face the unknown in the new year? How does Jesus bring you peace right now?

Activity: Make your New Year's resolutions as Christmas Christians. At Christmas, God sends people into new adventures. Make a resolution to say "Yes!" to an adventure God has planned for you (even if it stretches you)!

Prayer: Give God thanks for the trails of 2017 and the ways you grew in faith because of them! Offer God your acceptance for whatever He wants to give you in 2018.