

Worshiping God: My Treasure

Generally speaking, American Christians think of themselves as being a fairly generous bunch of folks. In a recent book by Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, however, the argument is made that we are not so generous after all. In *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give More Money Away*, Smith and Emerson show data that reveals that the median Christian giver donates .67% of his income to charities. Apparently only 9.4% of Christians actually tithe. Smith and Emerson also make the claim that if 90% of American Christians would tithe (allowing for 10% unemployment), we would have an additional \$85.5 billion for reaching the lost and serving the poor. American Christians alone have the capacity to relieve worldwide hunger and disease!

But the real question is "Why?" Smith and Emerson propose a number of possibilities, including our consumeristic culture and the deafening silence of church leaders, but perhaps the text for this week explains it even better:

Matthew 2:1-12

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "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." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"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."

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And 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." ⁹After 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. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And 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. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

In this story of the Magi, Matthew is continuing his presentation of Jesus Christ as:

- 1) the Son of David (Matthew 1:1-17) and
- 2) the Son of God (Matthew 1:18-25) and now
- 3) as the universal King (Matthew 2:1-12).

Jesus is worshipped with lavish gifts by Gentiles! Why? Notice four things about these wise men:

1. They saw something others didn't see. (2:1,2a)

They saw Him as King even when political leaders and clergy didn't. The song, "We Didn't Know Who You Was" describes just about everybody else in this story. But these wise men knew, even from their study of the heavenly bodies, that this Baby was Special.

2. They wanted something others didn't want. (2:10)

They went when others wouldn't go. Even (vs. 9) when they didn't know exactly where to go (no address, no GPS), they went toward Bethlehem. Notice that God later gave them specific instructions through the guiding star. So it is with us, we do what He says even if we can't see the entire outcome, knowing that He will guide us along the way.

3. They did something others didn't do. (2:2b-9)

There are some things that can make us very happy but notice here the unrestrained, unbounded joy of the wise men when they received what they were searching: "They rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Our giving begins with what we want. The true believer, more than anything else, simply wants Him.

4. They gave something others didn't give. (2:11,12)

They gave Him tribute, honor, and obedience befitting a King. What tribute can we give that honors Him as King? The tithe. How do we give it to Him? We bring it into the storehouse/temple. What is today's temple? The Church. We give gifts, of course, beyond the tithe to other charitable organizations, causes and people, but the tithe itself is reserved for the worship of Christ as King.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are some reasons that biblical giving is not the practice of many American Christians?
- 2) What should be the chief motivations for our giving?
- 3) Why is it important for our tithe to go into the "storehouse"?

Related Reading

[Christian Giving](#)

by Sandy Willson

[The Treasure Principal](#)

by Randy Alcorn

Digging Deeper

Pray that God will make you a generous giver.

Develop your giving plan.