

Grow Group Resources

Sermon Summary

- In this Advent sermon, Ryan explores the theme of joy by examining the story of the wise men in *Matthew 2*. He begins by explaining Advent as a season of waiting—both for Christ’s first coming and for His promised return. Advent, he notes, shapes the hearts of believers around themes such as hope, peace, joy, and love, helping the church reflect on the deeper meaning of Christmas beyond cultural celebration.
- Ryan sets the context by reading *Matthew 2:1–12*, the account of the wise men who journey from the East in search of the newborn King. These men, guided by a star, arrive in Jerusalem asking where the “King of the Jews” has been born. Their question disturbs King Herod, whose fear reveals his insecurity and desire to protect his power. Though Herod consults religious leaders who know the Scriptures and the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, their knowledge does not move them to action. In contrast, the wise men continue their journey, follow the star to Bethlehem, and upon finding the child Jesus, respond with worship, gifts, and overwhelming joy.
- Ryan highlights that Scripture describes the wise men as rejoicing “exceedingly with great joy,” emphasizing that biblical joy is more than fleeting happiness. It is a deep, sustaining delight rooted in God that can exist even in hardship. Drawing from passages such as *Habakkuk 3*, *Nehemiah 8*, and *Hebrews 12*, he explains that joy is not dependent on circumstances but is a source of strength that enables endurance, just as Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him.
- Using *Luke 2:10–11* as a lens, Ryan frames the message around four key ideas: good news, great joy, all people, and a Savior. He focuses first on the good news of the Messiah’s birth and observes three different responses to it in *Matthew 2*. The first response is paranoia, seen in Herod, who reacts with fear and hostility because Jesus threatens his authority. The second response is passivity, demonstrated by the chief priests and scribes who understand the prophecies but remain unmoved and unwilling to seek the Savior themselves. The third response is pursuit, embodied by the wise men, who actively seek Jesus despite distance, cost, and uncertainty.
- Ryan challenges listeners to reflect on their own response to the good news of Jesus. Some may respond with fear, resisting Christ because of the changes He demands. Others may drift into apathy, becoming overly familiar with the story without allowing it to transform their lives. True joy, he emphasizes, is found in pursuing Jesus wholeheartedly, as the wise men did. Their journey illustrates that joy is often discovered along the path of faithful seeking.

- He further explains that the journey to joy is not undertaken alone—God Himself is active in guiding people toward Christ. Just as God orchestrated the star to lead the wise men, He continues to work in human lives today, drawing people toward His Son. Joy, Ryan reminds the congregation, is a fruit of the Spirit and a gift God desires His people to experience. God is not indifferent to human emotions; He is invested in His people knowing deep and lasting joy.
- Another key theme is that this joy and salvation are for all people. The fact that God used a star to guide Gentile wise men reveals His heart for the nations. This moment fulfills God's promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his descendants. Ryan connects this truth to the church's mission, encouraging believers to participate in God's global work—whether through international missions or everyday faithfulness in their local communities.
- Finally, Ryan emphasizes that joy ultimately flows from salvation. Humanity longs for meaning, peace, and fulfillment, often seeking them in the wrong places. True joy is found when people encounter Jesus as Saviour. Quoting *Isaiah 12*, he shows that salvation produces praise, gratitude, and joy that overflows into witness. For believers who have lost their joy, Ryan points to *Psalms 51*, reminding them that joy can be restored through repentance, reflection, and renewed focus on Christ.
- Ryan concludes by calling the congregation to seek and savour the Saviour. In a busy and noisy season, believers are invited to slow down, remember their salvation, and abide in Christ. As Scripture promises, "In Your presence there is fullness of joy." True joy, he affirms, is found not in circumstances, but in the presence of Jesus Himself.

Discussion Questions

1. Start your discussion time in prayer, asking God to speak through and reveal Himself through the text and each other.
2. (Ice Breaker) Have you ever lost something important to you? How did you find it? What did it feel like when you got it back?
3. Have someone read Matthew 2:1-12 out loud.
 - What stood out to you in the text? Which questions arise?
4. The Wise Men rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. With Scripture in mind, how can we understand the theme of joy?
 - What is it? What can it accomplish in us? Where does it come from?
5. In the story, there are three responses to the good news of the Messiah being born:
 - Paranoia from Herod
 - Passivity from the Jewish Religious Leaders
 - Pursuit by the Wise Men.
 - Who do you identify with in your relationship with Jesus?
 - Why do you think some people are troubled by or afraid of the Gospel message?
6. The Wise Men encounter joy after the journey to Bethlehem. What steps can you take to pursue the joy that God makes available to us? (Ie. What produces joy in the life of a believer?)
7. It is significant that God guides the Wise Men from another nation to encounter Jesus. What does this speak about the mission of God, and perhaps about the religious people of the day?
8. Have a few people share their salvation stories.
 - Why does reflecting on our own salvation produce joy in us?
9. What are some obstacle you face in experiencing the joy of the Lord?
10. Close this time with prayer.