



GIVING YOUR GIFT TO JESUS

Part 3 of He Made Us Family: God's Work, Our Witness 2012

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Matthew 2:1-12 | December 16, 2012

THE TURNER FAMILY AND OUR FAMILY IN ETHIOPIA

Marci Turner: It was a dark time. It was a lonely time. It was all kind of about acquisition of things and activities and fun and escape. I was parenting on my own and it's hard when you're a wife, when your husband—you kind of feel like he's escaping from you. He was a man of many hobbies would be a good way to put it.

Pastor Sutton Turner: I really had a bucket list of all the things I thought that was gonna make me happy, own a big ranch, fly private aviation. It made me less happy and I became more and more depressed. In 2005, I went to Africa. I went expecting to go on a hunting trip and Jesus had a whole 'nother story planned. Right before I left, my—Marci, who had been going to church, asked me, "Please, just one time, go with me to church."

Marci Turner: Our marriage was in the skids at that point and so I started praying for him.

Pastor Sutton Turner: So I went back home that night after that church service and, unbeknownst to Marci, downloaded over a year's worth of podcasts.

Marci Turner: I really didn't believe that God could do a miraculous, miraculous change.

Pastor Sutton Turner: On the thirty-seven-hour flight to South Africa, I don't know how many sermons I listened to.

Marci Turner: I thought, okay, I can pray to Jesus and he might change my husband, but I didn't really have a goal that he would change him as much as he did.

Pastor Sutton Turner: So about halfway through the trip, my African guide is there, and I'm sure he thinks I'm crazy, just prayed and just said, "God, I made a wreck of my life. Whatever you want to do with my life, you've got it because I can't live like this." And I really realized all the sin that was in my life, what a horrible dad I was. I mean it was just—I was just overwhelmed with needing Jesus, I mean just needing him and calling out to him. And by God's grace, he saved me. And then when we went to the Middle East, my podcasting became, I mean, literally every single week, and I had never even set foot in Mars Hill Church. I mean, I knew every single thing that you guys had been talking about and preaching about and enjoying and celebrating. I felt like I was a member of the church or an active participant in the church, but had never been there. So we'd gather around the Apple TV, download it, and watch it. It was our gospel, our teaching, our growth for a long period of time. For every one person that calls Mars Hill Church home on a given weekend across one of our fourteen churches, you know, there's another twenty people that are podcasting it. So like this very weekend, there's 250,000 people that are podcasting it, just like Marci and I were. We're not their local church, but we are something that is helping them, by God's grace, to grow and develop as disciples of Christ and I want us to recognize what that extended family looks like. That extended family, and that opportunity to grow the extended family, is an awesome opportunity that we have and an influence that God has given us to steward. And now after nine trips to Africa and most recently this last trip to Ethiopia, I see our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, sons and daughters of Jesus Christ and, to me, that's—I would love for our immediate family at Mars Hill Church to see those kids as our brothers and sisters. Well, it's amazing what God is doing in Ethiopia and it's literally not every day that you're able to see what Jesus Christ is doing there. And the Bible college that Mars Hill is supporting and funding people that are studying the Bible, their history is an amazing history. Between 1972 and 1992, communism held Ethiopia, and they started closing down the churches and persecution of all of these churches. The elders, the twenty-eight elders, were thrown in jail.

Pastor Werku Golle: So this was the big office where they put our twenty-eight elders. Ooh. This is dark. I mean, our elders, when they were imprisoned for one year here and they were beaten and wounded here. So the Lord is, I mean, he was watching.

Pastor Sutton Turner: Well, the church, incredibly faithful, even without their leaders, continued to meet in house churches and literally survive no matter what. "Take our building, fine. Take our leaders, fine, but we love Jesus and we're not going to give up even with the persecution of our leaders." After communism falls, the church goes back and purchases the prison, purchases the prison, plants a church in the prison.

Pastor Werku Golle: How many students do you have? Thirteen, thirteen to fifteen students they have here. So they are teachers here. They are teaching Bible school this time.

Pastor Sutton Turner: Jesus is doing crazy stuff.

Pastor Werku Golle: Right. This building is for church.

Pastor Sutton Turner: So how many people will come? This Sunday, how many people will come and worship here?

Pastor Werku Golle: *[Speaking foreign language]* About 350 people.

Pastor Sutton Turner: And, it was amazing. I mean, I literally hugged the guys because I was so excited. In September, when they do baptisms, they just go down to a river. I mean, it's old school.

Pastor Werku Golle: Twenty-five minutes to walk on foot. There is a river.

Pastor Sutton Turner: When was the last time you did baptisms?

Pastor Werku Golle: *[Speaking foreign language]* We have done one baptism in September, last September.

Pastor Sutton Turner: How many people did you baptize?

Pastor Werku Golle: Sixteen people were baptized.

Pastor Sutton Turner: Sixteen people. Praise God. Praise God.

Pastor Werku Golle: God has—I mean, he honored us. See, buying this compound and that this is the church, this is the place where people worship him. And the Lord honored us and we don't think even of our imprisonment, never.

Pastor Sutton Turner: Seeing what's happened to my family and how he's totally changed my family and I so want that for more people. I want more men to experience what I've experienced in the love of the Father. In Ethiopia with this opportunity to be a part of—we're at right now, sixteen church planters right now we're a part of, those aren't Mars Hill Churches Ethiopia. No, no, no. Church planting in Ethiopia, they don't have signs out in front of the mud hut where they're meeting. That's the church. The church is people. So we don't care about that they're Mars Hill Church. We don't care about that. We care about planting churches and making disciples, simple enough. We want Jesus Christ to get all the glory. We don't care about any of that. We don't care that they're not called Mars Hill Church. We don't care. All we want is people to meet Jesus and for disciples to grow in Jesus. Those two things are what we're most focused on. So whether it's in Ethiopia, India, or it's in South America, wherever God calls us to do, we want people to make disciples and plant churches, not in the name of Mars Hill Church, but in the name of Jesus Christ.

[music]

A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

All right, time for a Christmas quiz, you ready? Christmas quiz. Calm down. Are you ready? Christmas quiz, number one, how many wise men were there? See, some of you said, "three," you were wrong. And then others of you didn't say anything because you knew I would say that the other people were wrong. We don't know. We just know they brought three gifts. Could have been two guys, could have been four guys, one cheap. We don't know.

Did the wise men visit Jesus in the manger, yes or no? No. It means your nativity scene is wrong. It's wrong. You just put it up. It's wrong. It's theologically incorrect. It's not heretical, but it's not right, right? We put the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in the living room. The wise men, they go in the kitchen. They are on their way from Persia. They are on their way but they've not yet arrived.

How do I know this? Oh, God wrote a book. It's a great book. In Matthew 2, we read about Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph and the magi, these, perhaps, three guys. We'll call them three because we don't know how many but we'll go with that. Maybe, perhaps, three guys. And what we see in Matthew 2 is this is the only account in the whole Bible of the wise men, the magi.

And so let's read it all together and let's see what it actually says. You ready? You excited? You fired up? All right, glad one of you is with me. Matthew 2, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to,'" what? "'Worship him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people," all the Bible scholars, "he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet.'"

It quotes Micah 5:2 written seven hundred years prior under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "'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.' Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And 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.'" He's a liar.

"After 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," the baby Jesus. "When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." They were not indie rockers, they were happy.

Verse 11, "And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and they worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way." That's the sum total of the teaching regarding the wise men, the magi.

WHERE WAS JESUS BORN?

So we're gonna continue with our Christmas quiz. First question, where was Jesus born? It's not a trick question, like the previous one. He was born in Bethlehem. Again, seven hundred years prior, Micah gave this prophecy, Micah 5:2, that Jesus, the Christ, the Savior, God become a man, Immanuel, God with us, would be born in the town of Bethlehem.

Now, Matthew, seven hundred years later, is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and says the Bible is true. Jesus was born exactly where the Bible promised he would be born. And every time I have an opportunity to do this, I have great delight in telling you that this is the book that God wrote. It's a perfect Word. It's the only perfect thing on the earth. The God who knows the future, the God who controls the future, reveals bits and pieces of it to us, telling us, in advance, what will happen and then when it does, we have confirmation

that he is trustworthy, that he is true, that he is good, and that he God. And so when Micah tells God's people that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, Matthew confirms that God never lies, knows the future, tells the truth, and it all came to pass just as God decreed.

And the significance is that Jesus was born in the city of David. This is the birthplace and the hometown of the great King David. Now, if we add Luke's account, there are only actually two New Testament accounts that really give us much detail about the birth of Jesus, early in the book of Matthew and early in the book of Luke, and I'd encourage you to read both sections during the holiday season. Luke gives us a bit more detail and he says that actually Mary and Joseph, Jesus' mother and adoptive father, did not live in the town of Bethlehem but that was the hometown of his adoptive father, Joseph, who was part of the family line of David.

And the government wanted to increase taxes. Oh, still happens, right? Still happens. It's in the Bible, that doesn't mean it's biblical. Nonetheless, the government wanted to increase taxes. And so what they decided was "We may not be taxing everyone for everything." Sounds familiar. And so they wanted everyone to go to their hometown of ancestry and origin to register to make sure that everybody was paying their taxes.

Well, Mary was near birth of Jesus and she was ready to bring the Savior into the world. And lo and behold, in the fullness of time, Mary and Joseph had to travel for the governmental census for tax purposes to the city of David, Bethlehem, where ultimately Jesus was born, in fulfillment to the prophecy in Micah 5:2. It shows you that God even works through greedy governments. There's hope.

Okay, so Jesus was born in Bethlehem and it's about five or six miles outside of Jerusalem. I've been there. I was there some years ago and I would just, as a caveat, say, pray for Bethlehem. It is the most Christian city in that entire region. Lots of other places are highly Jewish and highly Muslim, but in Bethlehem, you'll find a higher concentration of Christians, of Christians, people who really do know and love Jesus, and that's where Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem. So when you hear that the wise men went to Jerusalem and then they went to Bethlehem, that's an additional journey of some five or six miles.

HOW WAS JESUS BORN?

Second question in our Christmas quiz, how was Jesus born? How was he born? And I love this line, careful reading of the Scriptures, Matthew 2:2, when the wise men, the magi arrived, they say he is "Born king of the Jews. Born king of the Jews." Don't miss this.

Now Herod the king, he was not a rightful heir to the throne. He was not born king. He was a man who was not necessarily a worshiper of the God of the Bible, was not one who loved the Lord, but he declared himself to be king of the Jews, and his nomination was accepted by the Roman government. And Herod was a man who was not born king.

In addition in that day, people were generally not born king. A king would have many wives. He would have many children, many sons. And near the end of his reign, he would choose one of his sons to become king. Jesus was King from birth. That's what it says. The magi get it right. He's not one who is born to become king. Jesus is born as King. God becomes a man. Again, he's Immanuel, God with us. He's existed eternally. He's ruled and reigned over all and now he has humbly entered into human history and he comes born King.

And let me say that this is often overlooked in the season of Christmas. Jesus is portrayed as an infant, not one who grows up, one who is alive, not one who is put to death. We love to see Jesus in that innocent, fragile infant state, but don't miss the fact that he was born, what? King. That's why Herod is concerned.

Here comes the real King, not just the king, the Bible declares the King of kings, which means the Lord Jesus, in all humility, he left a throne in heaven and started ruling and reigning from an animal's feeding trough in Bethlehem. It doesn't matter where he is. He doesn't need to be in a palace. He doesn't need to be on a throne. He's the real King and he's born King. He starts as King.

WHAT WERE THE FIRST RESPONSES TO JESUS?

Next question, what were the first responses to Jesus? There are three responses. The first response is Herod's. His response is self-interest, self-interest. All he wants to know is, "Oh, who's the one who claims to be King? And I need to know where he is at." And he is ultimately lying when he says, "Because I too want to go worship him."

We'll see in the ensuing weeks as we study Matthew together, his real motivation is to kill Jesus, to kill Jesus, because his only interest in Jesus is selfish. See, if Herod is a king and Jesus is a King then Herod is a king who wants to destroy Jesus because he doesn't want any rivals to his throne.

Like some of us, we want to be the proverbial king of our own life. We want to be in charge. We want to be the boss. We want to do what we want to do. We don't want anyone else to have any authority over us. That's Herod. He has only a selfish interest in Jesus.

Is your interest in Jesus like that, only selfish? If you can use him for your own purposes, that's the only reason you'd be interested in him. "If he heals me, I'm interested. If he gives me a spouse, I'm interested. If he allows us to have children, I'm interested. If he gets me a job, I'm interested. If he makes my life better, I'm interested. If he helps fulfill the vision I have for my life, then I'm interested. Otherwise, I'm not because my only interest in Jesus is selfish interest."

The second response is disinterest. It's a very curious telling of the story that these wise men come from the east and they arrive in the city, and they're looking for the King. And he's not in the palace where you would expect the King to be, and he's not in the temple where you would expect the Jewish king to be.

And so the scholars are assembled, the chief priests and the scribes, those who make their living doing what I get to do, studying and teaching the Scriptures, the Old Testament Word of God. And they're assembled and the question is asked, "Where is Jesus to be born?" And they go right to Micah 5:2, "Oh, he's gonna be born in Bethlehem."

And it says that Herod was stirred up, concerned, at the birth of a King and it says that as well, the city of Jerusalem was stirred up by this news of the birth of a King, yet there's no indication that anyone else went to Bethlehem, including the Bible scholars. There's no indication that others went to investigate. They were disinterested. They were disinterested.

How many of you, you would say you're disinterested in Jesus, truly you are? Your life and your days and your mind is consumed by other things, your health, your job, your relationships, your well-being, your security, your appearance, your whatever, and you're disinterested in Jesus. You may know some facts, you may have been under some Bible teaching. You may even have the ability to quote the verses and to pass the quiz. But you're not compelled to pursue him. You're not going to be inconvenienced by him. You're not

seeking and searching for him. You're disinterested. See, for them, Jesus was, in large part, more of a seemingly theological idea than a relationship, facts they were to know, not someone they were to meet.

Let me submit to you that that was my life until I became a Christian at age nineteen. I knew a little bit of Bible. I could answer some of the basic Christmas questions, but I wasn't looking for Jesus. I wasn't going to meet with Jesus. I wasn't wanting to personally relate to Jesus. It was just a handful of facts and I was more preoccupied with other things, disinterested, disinterested.

And then the third reaction to Jesus is genuine interest. These three wise men, they're genuinely interested. I mean, they've traveled from the east, seemingly a long distance at a great expense and inconvenience, and they show up in Jerusalem, "Where's Jesus? He's not here." And what they don't do is say, "Well, we looked, we tried, we're gone." "Where might he be? Get the scholars together. We need to get more information. We're looking for him. Where is he?" They're very determined to find him. Do you see that?

He's in Bethlehem. "Well, then we're going to travel there. We're going to keep looking, keep seeking, keep searching. We need to meet him. We need to find him." They're genuinely interested in Jesus. Friends, is your interest in Jesus a selfish interest or is it disinterest or is it a genuine interest? You really want to get to know Jesus. You want to meet him.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE WISE MEN

Continuing with our Christmas quiz, talking about these magi, these wise men, how many of you truly right now, you've got them in your house? Got them in your—don't lie, it's church. Right, you got them in your house? How many of you, they're on your Christmas card? How many of you are even thinking, "Oh, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are,' I should edit that. 'We Maybe Perhaps Three or So Kings of Orient Are.'" How many of you right now you got these guys in your home?

We know so little about them, right? We know so—they're sort of mysterious figures. I'll give you four things we don't know. What we don't know about the wise men and then what we do know about the wise men. Number one, we don't know, as I said, we don't know how many there were. It says they brought three gifts. Have you ever had a Christmas party where cheap relatives showed up with nothing? Might have happened, we don't know. There could have been twenty-seven guys, three presents, we don't know. We don't know how many guys there were, we'll go with three. That's fine.

We don't know who they were. Some will say they were kings, others will say they were pagan priests. Some say they were astronomers/astrologers. In that day, it was kind of all the same. We don't know. Now, it does seem like they're rich and powerful. I mean, they've traveled a long way, probably with a caravan. In addition, they get access to King Herod. You don't just get that. He actually does a favor for them assembling the scholars and then they're free to travel to Bethlehem. So—and then we look at the gift that they give, a very generous, lavish series of gifts, very costly. You get the impression these are rich and powerful people, very rich and powerful people.

They may have been like the professors at the pagan school that Daniel went to. Back in the Old Testament, there's a guy named Daniel and he's taken captive, along with God's people, to a place called Babylon, a very godless, pagan place, and they're into sorcery and divination and witchcraft and *Twilight* and all of these kinds of horrendous things. And—that's what it says in the Hebrew. And then they tell him, "Well, you need to go learn all these things, all of these occultic, dark practices." And they have a school for it. Well, these men who come to visit Jesus many years later, they would have been the kind of men who would have been professors at the school that Daniel was told to go to. These were the teachers of the pagan religion, the occultic practices.

Okay, and these things still exist today, the worship of goddesses and other gods and created beings and angels and an unhealthy devotion to the environment and the created world and pantheism and panentheism and it does come out. I get hammered for it, but things like *Avatar* and things like the vampire craze are all ways of ancient paganism being revisited where there's a blending between Creator and creation, and between human beings and the environment, and human beings and animals. This is also inclusive in Native American religions where animals are said to be inhabited with certain spirit beings.

Now, these things are still very popular and very present in our day and these men, by all accounts, seem to be those kinds of men. They're into paganism. They're into the worship of Creator and creation. They're into other religions. They're into other spiritualities. They're into, not just angels, but demons, and they're very learned, and they're very powerful, and they're very rich, and they're very famous. They're very, very pagan, very pagan.

In addition, number three, we don't know exactly where they're from. It says that they came from the east. So many believe that they came from Persia. As we studied the book of Esther and the great land of Persia, there is a belief that perhaps they came from the Persian Empire. When I visited the alleged birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem, there's a church built over the place where tradition tells us that Jesus was buried. And there, outside of the church, there's an inscription showing the wise men coming from the east, and tradition tends to hold that they ventured from Persia.

And number four, we don't know what the moving star was. They're following a star that moves. Some say it's a comet. Others say it's an alien. Others say it's an angel. We don't know. It's kind of like in the days of Moses where God's people were walking through the wilderness and there was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and it would lead them and they would follow it. It's kind of like that. We don't know what it is. They show up and they say, "Okay, we saw this star and we've been following it. And where is it now?" We don't know what the star is.

WHAT WE DO KNOW ABOUT THE WISE MEN

So all of that to say these three, perhaps, are shrouded in mystery. We don't know a lot about them. Here are four things we do know. Here's what we do know about the wise men, number one, your nativity scene is wrong. It's wrong. It's wrong. Your nativity scene always has, what? Manger, baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, wise men. It said right here in Matthew 2 that they came to the house after Jesus was born. It says, "Sometime after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph were at a house in Bethlehem, and then the wise men came to them."

When I first told my wife this, she sort of freaked out a little bit. She grew up in church. She'd heard the story her whole life. She's like, "I did not—it's wrong." I mean it was like a thing at the Driscoll house. My wife immediately went into the living room, and we had the nativity scene all set up, we always do, and the kids always like it, and she literally grabbed the wise men and moved them to another part of the house, literally, and they've been there every year since.

And our kids are like, "How come our nativity scene's wrong?" It's not wrong. Theirs is wrong. Theirs is wrong. Ours is right. You take the guys wherever you live, put them in the

easternmost section of the house, okay? They're on their way. They're not there yet. They're on their way.

Just ruined the entire nativity economic potential for all. You're welcome. There are a lot of nativity salesmen right now saying, "Oh, I knew I shouldn't have gone to Mars Hill Church." The nativities are fine, just move the wise men, okay? Just move the wise men. Go put them at your neighbor's house, all right?

Number two, God loves all nations, races, and peoples. At this point, you know, the Bible explodes with Abraham and he becomes Jewish, and then God's people become Israel and it's all about God's people, the nation of Israel. And then here comes Larry, Curly, and Moe from the east, and they're pagan. They're the wrong religion. They're Gentile. They're the wrong race. They're from the wrong nation. They're just wrong. They're just totally wrong.

They just, "Hey, we're looking for Jesus." "What are you guys doing here? You're not descendants of Abraham. You're Gentiles. You don't worship the God of the Bible. You don't know any verses. You don't even know where he's gonna be born. You don't even have Micah. You had to call us in to do Micah for you."

And here's what it shows, at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, all nations, all races, all cultures, all backgrounds, all peoples are welcome to come to Jesus, amen? I love that because we're pagan Gentiles, and there we are meeting Jesus.

Number three, other religions and spiritualities need to come to Jesus. What the story doesn't say is they were in the east worshiping a false pagan god involved with the occult and demonism and they didn't need to come to Jesus because they were fine. That's how the story would read, where I live. "They were spiritual, good enough. They were religious, good enough. They had their own gods and goddesses. They had their own traditions. They had their own spiritual heritage and history. They had their own opinion and conjecture." It doesn't say that.

These men are very religious, very spiritual, very devout. They're, perhaps, the equivalent of Bible college or seminary teachers in their religion. You know what they need? Jesus. You know what they need to do? They literally need to come to Jesus. If you're here and you're moral, you're religious, you're spiritual, you come from another perspective, you need to come to Jesus. You need to come to Jesus. That's exactly what happens here.

And number four, rich and educated people need Jesus too. Sometimes the story is told, Jesus was poor, his mom is poor, his dad is poor. Jesus loves poor people. He totally does, the Bible talks a lot about the poor. God loves the poor. God cares for the poor. God provides for the poor, but God also loves the rich. God also pursues the rich. God also saves the rich.

These guys are not poor, they're rich. They're rich. Again, they've traveled a long ways with a great caravan and it says that the gift that they're going to give to Jesus is "treasures." You don't have treasures unless you're rich. It's not just the poor who are welcome to come to Jesus, it's also the rich. It's not just the simple, it's also the wise. It's not just those who have no power, it's those who have much power. Everyone is invited to Jesus.

Let me invite you to Jesus today. Have you come to Jesus? They literally come to Jesus. Have you come to Jesus? Rich and poor, young and old, black and white, educated and uneducated, those who are highly spiritual and those who have no spirituality, all are welcome and need to come to Jesus, that includes you.

WHAT MADE THE WISE MEN WISE?

Talking about these wise men, here's the next question, what made the wise men wise? What made the wise men wise? Four more things, number one, they were wise to seek Jesus despite uncertainty, expense, and hardship. They were wise to seek Jesus. They were looking for him, despite uncertainty. They didn't know exactly where he was. This was a great inconvenience, weeks, maybe months, of travel. Even when they get to Jerusalem, he's not there. It's an inconvenience. "We got to get the scholars together. We need to get the government involved. We need to have somebody come and interpret the Old Testament, then we got to go another five or six miles." How many of you wouldn't have made it to church today if you had to go by foot or on camel five or six miles? Some of you are like, "I parked and walked and I am not gonna do that again."

They had uncertainty, expense, and hardship. They had to take time off work. They had to gather a caravan. They had to think about their safety. I don't know if you know this, if you're just walking from the east to, you're not sure where, with a bunch of gold, you'd probably need some help. "What are you guys doing?" "We're looking for a baby to give all this gold to." "Oh, really? Where is he?" "We don't know. Could you help us?" "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I would love to help you."

They're likely traveling with a caravan. They've got to have security detail. They've got to watch over their gifts because they're not from this country. They're foreigners, little dangerous. In addition, they don't worship the same god so they're not gonna get a lot of help from the locals, but they're prominent figures. They're public figures. They're traveling with gold, treasures.

Do you see where, for them, the pursuit of Jesus was the most important thing, more important than their comfort or their security, more important than their wealth or their stability? "We want to meet Jesus." Let me submit to you, meeting Jesus is more important than anything and everything else. They were wise to seek him. Have you been seeking Jesus? Are you seeking Jesus? Are you looking for him? Do you want to meet him? Do you want to get to know him?

Number two, they were wise to seek biblical truth about Jesus. Again, most believe that they were teachers in their culture, not students. They were the ones who wrote the books and gave the lectures. They didn't read the books and listen to the lectures of others. They were the teachers, not the students. And in that day, people tended not to pick a school as much as a teacher. So you'd pick your teacher and then your teacher would have a class of students and those students would pay to be taught by that teacher. It's a very prominent position. You're a very significant person if you have students and you're the professor, you're the teacher.

And they were very wise to demonstrate some humility and some teachability. They show up in Jerusalem, "Is Jesus here?" "No." "Well, where is he? Do we have any Bible scholars? Is there anybody here that knows more than us? Is there anybody here that has given their life to knowing the Word of God? Could we please hear from them? Could they tell us what the Scriptures say?"

Friends, they're not Christians yet, but they trust the Word of God more than some Christians do. They believe that it tells us about Jesus and they believe that it tells the truth about Jesus. Some would profess to be Christians and don't even hold the Scriptures in the same high regard as these yet-unbelieving men. And they were wise to seek biblical teaching and biblical truth. Are you seeking Jesus in the Scriptures? Are you humble enough to learn and to listen and to be taught?

Number three, they were wise to seek Jesus even though he did not fit their expectations. I can still remember, as a non-Christian in college, my now wife, Grace, gave me a Bible as a gift. And I had never really read it and I kind of grew up a little bit in Catholic church and I didn't know Jesus, wasn't the church's fault. I was disinterested, my fault. And I thought I knew a little bit about Jesus and enough to be fine and then I started reading the Bible that Grace gave me and he was really different than I was expecting.

To be honest with you, when I first read it, there are these guys called the Pharisees. They're very tough, legalistic, self-righteous, they like to punish people and make rules. I thought they were pretty fantastic until they murdered Jesus and then I thought, well, that probably was not good. Right, you don't have to be a huge theologian to know that the guys who whacked Jesus, wrong team, okay?

But I thought oh, devout, pick a fight, they're strong, they make rules, they're in charge. Go Pharisees. The story played out very differently than I was anticipating. Jesus was a lot more loving and nice and kind than I was expecting and the religious people were a lot more like me than I was expecting.

Now, when they come to Jesus, they come to Jesus, these wise men do, and he's not like they're expecting. If you heard this, "A king has been born," and a star shows up to lead you to his presence, you're expecting something big, right? You're expecting to show up to a palace, you're expecting to show up to a temple. That's probably why they showed up in Jerusalem. "Well, of course, he's gonna be in the temple or the palace." "No, he's in the manger." "What? Isn't he rich?" "No, he's poor." "Well, isn't his dad prominent?" "No, he's obscure, a carpenter." "What?" It's not as impressive as they were anticipating outwardly. It doesn't look like what they were expecting.

How many of you are Christians, you've had that experience? You thought you knew about Jesus and then you met him and you were like, "That's not the dude I was thinking of. He's very different than I was expecting." The wise men were very wise to seek and accept Jesus even though he didn't fit their expectations.

See, don't create a Jesus that you wish he was and then worship him. That's idolatry. It's the worshiping of a created thing. Let Jesus be Jesus and worship him for who he is, and worship him for how he is. Some of you have a picture of Jesus that's just not true. They came to a true picture of Jesus and loved and worshiped him as he was, not as they expected him to be.

And number four, the wise men were wise to worship Jesus with their wealth. Now here's the truth, we either worship our wealth or we worship God with our wealth. Here's what it says—and let me say, these men came to Jesus as pagans and they left as Christians. My prayer for you today, even if you've come here as a pagan, religious, moral, spiritual person, that you would leave here as a Christian, meeting Jesus.

These are probably the first converts in the New Testament. These are the first Christians, those who passed from death to life. I really want that same thing for all of you. I want you, not just to, like Herod, know about Jesus but have only selfish interests or, like the scribes and Pharisees, know about Jesus but be disinterested in really meeting him and being changed by him. I want you to be like the magi, genuinely interested in Jesus, meet him and be changed by him.

THEIR TREASURES

And we see the change in these men by their gifts, by their gifts. Here's exactly what it says, Matthew 2:10–11, "They," what? "Rejoiced. They rejoiced." Why? Because they're gonna meet Jesus. Do you rejoice that you've met Jesus? This is why we tend to put singing after the sermon. I want you to meet Jesus, or be reminded of the Jesus you've met, and then rejoice.

You say, "Well, did they really rejoice?" "Exceedingly with great joy." "What if they were introverts?" "Exceedingly with great joy." "What if they're indie rockers?" "Exceedingly with great joy." "What if they were worried about what other people think?" "Exceedingly with great joy." "What if they didn't have a good voice?" "Exceedingly with great joy." Amen?

That was not exceedingly with great joy on the response, by the way. Very disappointing. That's Mars Hill, they're like, "Yeah." Oh. All right, exceedingly—they rejoiced. Ready to trade all of our Calvinists for a few Pentecostals and just try and—I stacked the wood, but I have no match, Mars Hill, I have no match. Need the Pentecostals to bring the match. "Pastor Mark, did they rejoice in their heart?" "Exceedingly with great joy." You can't just do that in your heart. Yes. Gosh. Look, there's nothing else to be excited about right now, right? Weather's bad, economy's bad, everything's bad. "I met Jesus, yay," exceedingly with great joy. Okay.

"And going into the," what? "The house." Again, go home, fix the manger. "They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they," what? "They fell down and worshiped him." Now I'm old and inflexible but here—they're—you see it? You see it? Now how many of you don't do this unless you dropped more than change, okay? This is work, especially for grown men.

Okay, but their body says it all. Their body says it all. This is worship. Now, particularly in an eastern culture, grown men don't fall on the ground. They don't lie on the ground unless they're paying homage to a king or God. That's what they do. This is their way of saying, "All that I have, all that I am, it belongs to Jesus."

And look at the object of their worship, their adoration. It's a baby. Friends, they know far less about Jesus than you and me. He hasn't preached a sermon yet. He hasn't cast out a demon yet. He hasn't healed anyone yet. He hasn't died on the cross and risen from death. He's just getting started on the earth.

And what do they do? Rejoicing exceedingly, they worship him. We have even more reason to worship Jesus. We've got this privileged position in history. We know what he said. We know what he did. We know that he died. We know that he rose. We know that he's true. We know that he's coming again.

You can tell a lot about somebody just by their posture. Right, a man gets down on one knee, he's saying something to a lady. Christians get down on two knees, they're saying something to the Lord. They fell down and worshiped him. Do you think it was awkward, grown men worshiping a baby, rich men worshiping a poor baby, Persian men worshiping a Jewish baby? When you see who Jesus is, nothing else matters. Nothing else matters.

"Then, opening their," what? "Their treasures," their treasures. It's amazing that during the holiday season, we tend to give gifts. It all started here. When you give gifts, when you receive gifts, I want you to remember Jesus is a gift that God gives to us and the magi come to also give gifts to him. "Opening their treasures," this is lavish, generous, extravagant gift-giving, "they offered him gifts," three things, you know what they are. What are they? This is not a trick question. Gold, frankincense, myrrh, okay?

Gold is for kings, still is. It still is. This is lavish wealth, given to the baby Jesus, lavish wealth, gold. It shows that Jesus is our King. Again, Matthew 2:2, "He was born king."

Number two, frankincense, this shows that Jesus is our priest. As the name would indicate, it's incense. Incense is used by the priests in the temple. It's used by the priests on the holidays and the feasts and the festivals. It's part of the worship of God. Incense is like prayer. It's sweet and it ascends to the Lord. That's why in Revelation it talks about God's people, when they pray, it's like incense in a bowl that is sweet in his nostril. It's all beautiful, poetic imagery that incense ascends from us to the Lord and we want it to be sweet in his presence.

And that was done by the priests who would mediate between God and people. So Jesus is our King and he's our priest. He's God become a man. There's one mediator between men and God, the man Christ Jesus, Paul tells Timothy. Hebrews tells us repeatedly that Jesus is our great high priest. This is prophetic. This is wise men bringing gifts from afar for Jesus as King and Jesus as interceding priest.

But the third one is the most peculiar of all. My assumption is you're not going to give this to your kids for Christmas. Gold, frankincense, third one is? Myrrh. This is an odd one. It's like an embalming fluid for the dead. This shows that Jesus is King, priest, and sacrifice. He's our substitute. This is all the foreshadowing of the cross.

We hear of myrrh—I'll get it right, it's in Mark 15:23. We hear of it again when Jesus is on the cross. Our King and priest came to die for our sin. Because he keeps saying that he is God and King and our great high priest, they conspired to put Jesus to death. And when Jesus is crucified, he who is without sin is crucified in our place for our sin, that's why he's called Jesus. His name literally means he's God our Savior.

And he's being crucified, and the soldiers take a stick with a sponge on the end and they seek to shove it in his mouth. And I've told you before, it was probably their version of toilet paper. That's what a soldier would use to cleanse themselves in the battlefield, like a toilet brush in our day. They sought to shove that in Jesus' mouth when he was being crucified, and the Bible says that it had on it a few things, including, what do you think? Myrrh. See, that was the second time in his life that Jesus was offered myrrh. The first time was as a baby and the second one as a grown man on a cross.

They did it in mockery of him. It would have been like an antiseptic. It would have helped to dull the pain. But to take that, he would have had to have also taken in his mouth, all of the uncleanness of the soldier who was mocking him. And so Jesus, with great dignity, rejected it. He did not partake of it. He endured the suffering without any alleviation, and without that shame.

Jesus then dies on the cross in our place for our sins. The ten fingers and ten toes that Mary counted were nailed to a cross. And Jesus' body, we're told in John 19, was prepared for burial, wrapped in a near mummified state. In that day, they would wrap you in upwards of a hundred pounds of burial linens and spices and bodily preparations. It says in John 19 that Jesus' body was prepared with, what do you think, friends? Myrrh.

And he was put in a cold, dark tomb. And three days later, conquering sin and death, Jesus came to life and he took a deep breath in his lungs, and what's the first thing he smelled? Myrrh. It was the sweet smell of victory over sin and death; that his body smelled like death, but he had conquered death and he had conquered sin. And Jesus walked back into town, resurrected, his life fully restored. Every step, as he's coming to proclaim his victory, he's smelling the myrrh.

A MARS HILL FAMILY UPDATE

Mars Hill, we, every week, we come to Jesus. We come to meet with him together. We come to worship him together. We come to worship him as King and priest and sacrifice. And it's my great honor, every year, to give you a bit of a family update. What we do at the Driscoll home is when there's something important, I'll call out, "Time for a family meeting," and all the kids pile on the couch and Grace and I sit together and we have a talk about something, how are things going, what are we doing?

This is the end of our year. Jesus comes into a family, he dies and rises to make us church family. And I have the great honor of giving you a little bit of an update how our family is doing. And I've been doing this every year for sixteen years and my great joy is to report that every year, by the grace of God, more people have come to Jesus than the year before. What happened to the wise men, we want to happen to many, many men, women, and children.

This has been the most fruitful year we've ever had in the history of our church. And if you'd like more details, we do have the "God's Work, Our Witness" annual report. We tend to put out more information than any large church I know and we'd encourage you to take that with you. You can also find it online at marshill.com and it'll give you things to be praying for our church, and to be rejoicing for God's grace to our church.

Here's some things I want to share with you. First of all, our family is growing. This year we had the pleasure of birthing four new churches, four new churches this year: Mars Hill Orange County, Mars Hill Portland, Mars Hill Sammamish, Mars Hill Rainier Valley. We, at Mars Hill, believe that the birthing of children is a blessing and the birthing of churches is a blessing, and so we want to rejoice. Four churches were planted this year, 1,115 people were baptized, that means they are publicly declaring that they have come to Jesus, that he has changed them and that they are now part of the family of God. That's amazing, is it not? One thousand one hundred and fifteen people?

And we still got a little time to go so our big Christmas service is December 23. And if you've not yet been baptized and you've come to faith in Jesus Christ—it shows his death, burial, resurrection—let us know. We'll baptize you at your Christmas celebration on December 23.

Earlier in the year, we were honored as being the third fastest-growing church in America and the twenty-eighth largest church in America. That is miraculous. We are working primarily in areas that are not highly Christian and reaching out to people who are not walking with Jesus, most of the time, when we meet them.

And so we rejoice in all of God's grace to us. And we count people because people count. I don't just have kids, I have five, and I count them. I don't say, "I don't know, numbers don't matter." It does to the one who got lost, okay?

Number two, our family is maturing. Something to be praying for this year, Mars Hill students. We have now, on a good Sunday, upwards of three thousand children under the age of ten. So there is a junior high, high school tsunami on the horizon, okay? And we have historically not been great at student ministry and we have hired Adam Ramsey, and he is now overseeing Mars Hill Student Ministry and he's preached at a few of our churches recently. He just got in country from Australia and I think at the first meeting, twelve kids gave their life to Christ, the next meeting, ten kids gave their life to Christ. What you're gonna see in this upcoming year is a great emphasis on junior high and high school ministry at Mars Hill

Church.

In addition, an increasing emphasis on the children. We've developed the "Lost & Found" children's curriculum to teach theology about Jesus to little kids. It's now implemented and our hope and our prayer and our goal is to be, not just entertaining the kids, but educating the kids in Christ.

Pray for Mars Hill Music. We're on the cusp of signing a distribution deal with EMI and that will allow our bands to distribute their albums to be on the radio, to be doing concerts and a lot of other things and we're very excited about that.

And pray for our Community Groups, and if you're not in one, that really is family. That's where we gather every week to discuss the subject of the sermon, according to the Scriptures. People do meals together. They do life together. They love and serve one another. Christians, non-Christians, everyone is welcome. It includes time sitting literally in someone's home most of the time, being the family of God and inviting others into the family of God. And in this ensuing year, we need that number of Community Groups to go up. So if you're willing to be a Community Group coach or host or leader, let us know.

Our family is reaching out as well. We're privileged, Mars Hill, to live in a period of time, where, in the providence of God, we started the church sixteen years ago at about the same time something called the Internet came into existence. In the providence of God, without a denomination over us or a network or anything sponsoring us, we happened to start near something called Microsoft, and we've sort of ridden this technological wave. It's been an amazing opportunity for us. So this year, 13.5 million sermons were downloaded, and for everyone who listens to anything that I say, I want to sincerely say thank you.

In addition, you probably don't know this, you funded, this year, twenty-three church planters in India and also sixteen church planters in Ethiopia. And those are missionaries, those are nationals who love Jesus and we rejoice that we get to help them.

In addition, be in prayer, the doctrine book that I had the privilege of cowriting, it's a simple but pretty robust theological work, about a thousand footnotes, we've negotiated with a publisher to get the rights back for the international translation. We've been getting a lot of requests, particularly from those who are Spanish speaking, for more resources as we do provide Spanish subtitles for our sermons. And so we are translating *Doctrine* into Spanish and we'll give it away free online and it will allow us to help those who are Spanish speaking, which quite frankly, is very, very, very important to me and my almost totally fluent daughter, Ashley, who is now teaching young Spanish children how to speak English as she is very much in love with those who are Spanish speaking as well.

Our family is also stewarding. This year, we came into a new budget model. We have achieved our fiscal spending goals. Our giving is a little down, but also our spending is down and we have kept our costs under control. We had a full external audit because we want to be accountable and our auditor gave us an A+, an A+ for how we handle the money that ultimately belongs to the Lord Jesus. So like the wise men, when you come and you give your gold, you want to ask, "Are they stewarding it well?" In the grace of God, the independent external audit says absolutely.

And for double accountability, we have joined the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. This is essentially the gold standard of accountability for Christian churches and ministries and we've met all of their criteria. And so we have two external independent annual audits of all of our spending and procedures so that you can give generously and we can steward wisely.

I'll give you a little indication as well, as part of our annual report, what it looks like for giving at Mars Hill. This last year, as you'll see, about 24 percent of people have given nothing, and some of you are non-Christians, we love you, but that is concerning because I know that most of you are God's people. Forty-three percent have given \$500 or less, each of my kids will be in there, including my six-year-old. He's probably pushing a hundred bucks at this point. He's doing pretty good.

For those of you who are giving \$500 to \$1,500 a year to Mars Hill, that's about 14 percent. Those who are giving \$1,500 to \$4,000, about 11 percent, and the higher the number goes, the smaller the number of givers. So when you get to the point of \$50,000 or more, I think the list is actually less than ten people in a church that's far more than ten thousand.

Here's the big idea, we're not a rich church. We're not—I was talking to a guy recently, they paid \$100 million cash for their new building. We're not that church, okay? We could pay a hundred dollars for a new building but not a hundred million dollars. We're not a rich church. And what can happen is the same thing that happens culturally, an entitlement expectation where "Somebody somewhere owes me something." As God's people, it is our church and it's our opportunity and it's our generosity. What didn't happen was the wise men came to Jesus, gave their gold, and then the Christians came and took it. If you are Christian, we want you to give generously and sacrificially and cheerfully. Those are the criteria of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

And one of the goals that I would give to you that Grace and I have had since the beginning of our marriage is every year it is our plan to give more than the year before. And now we've been married over twenty years, in God's grace, he's answered that request. Every year we've been able to give more than the year before.

So for those of you who are giving, we say thank you. For those of you who aren't giving, let me encourage you to be starting. And for those of you who are giving, let me ask you to prayerfully consider how to give more every year so that your life is a pattern of generosity. I love that it says that they gave out of their treasures, out of their treasures.

Here's what's coming up in 2013. In January, pray for this, we start the book of Ephesians. I've got a brand-new book coming out, *Who Do You Think You Are?* We've got small group curriculum. We're hoping and praying it will be the biggest thing we've ever done. Then we're gonna start into the book of Acts. I'm gonna do a chunk every year, over the course of many years, to take the fifty-eight sermons it will require to conclude Acts.

Then we're gonna do something called "My Best Sermon Ever." I'm gonna take a little break during the summer with the family. We're bringing in some outside preachers and friends. So we've got Wayne Grudem lined up. We've got Bruce Ware lined up. We've got Paul Tripp lined up. We've got Larry Osborne lined up. We've got some great world-class Bible teachers coming in to preach and teach. They'll be here this summer. You'll greatly enjoy them and then we're gonna hit the Ten Commandments next fall.

We also have the Resurgence Conference coming up this year. It'll be in Mars Hill Downtown and Mars Hill Bellevue, Lord willing, connected by technology, also out to Albuquerque and our Mars Hill network churches in Reno and Orlando. Confirmed so far, Greg Laurie, Rick Warren, James MacDonald, and Matt Chandler, as well as Crawford Loritts will all be visiting Mars Hill next fall, and so be in prayer for that event.

And then lastly as well, every family needs a home and for us, buildings are homes for the family. And because we're not a rich church, we need everybody to do their part. And I want to set before you these objectives. We want to end the year very strong financially so that we can have a very fruitful year next year. So let me share some opportunities with you and what we're working on.

First of all, it's Mars Hill Everett, you've heard about it. It's an old armory. Everett is centrally located for the North Sound region. It's right next to the minor league ballpark. It's right next to the courthouse. It's right next to the park and ride. It's kind of literally where everything converges. It's a great building. We got a great price on it. And now we need to do renovations so that Mars Hill Everett could move permanently into their home. For those of you that are homeowners, remember your first home, how excited you were to get it but how you had to go financially all in and there was a lot of work to do? That's how it is right now in Everett. So as you give, we want to give above and beyond to get Everett opened up.

And then in addition, we've got Mars Hill Downtown Seattle. I'm happy to report that we have concluded the contract. We will have a big Christmas Eve service there, just one on December 24 to open it up. It's the oldest church in the city of Seattle. It's the busiest street on the West Coast and it's such a big deal that the *Seattle Times* did a front-page story on it and the *Wall Street Journal* also did a feature on us moving into this building. So pray like crazy we get that thing opened. It's gonna take a little work to get it up to modern usage, electrical. There are no bathrooms. Just a few details, so we want to get those taken care of.

In addition, you've heard about, and here it is, Mars Hill Tacoma. This is a church that, Lord willing, we'll be planting next year. I'm happy to report that we have officially closed the deal on Tacoma and we are now the legal owners of one of the oldest church buildings in Tacoma and we'll be planting Mars Hill Tacoma next year.

Couple things, as we talk about the magi bringing their treasures to Jesus. How to give? Online at marshill.com/give. We also want you to sign up for a Connect account. Go to marshill.com and you can sign up and then we can be in regular contact with you. You can tell us your pledge for the upcoming year, "Here's what I think I'm going to be able to do." It allows us to communicate with you and it allows you to communicate with us so please do that. In addition, that will allow you to set up regular giving and make a pledge for next year. You can also give on Sundays during the service. You can take the offering envelope and put that in the basket or take it home to mail it in but please don't mail cash.

OUR FAMILY NEEDS BIG BROTHERS AND BIG SISTERS

Here's my last big idea, our family needs big brothers and sisters. It's interesting, Jesus comes into the world as big brother. The Bible says he's got brothers and sisters. I'm a big brother. I'm the oldest of five and one of the things that the big brothers and the big sisters need to do is take additional responsibility to care for the younger ones, the littler ones.

Mars Hill's got some big churches, it's got some small churches too. It's got some well-established churches and got some baby churches too, got some churches where people have means and churches where people don't have means. They're college students and single moms and people who are just trying to put life together.

And so one of the things I do a lot with Zac and with Ashley, Ashley's the oldest girl and Zac's the oldest boy, I often put an arm around them, kiss them on the head, look them in the eye and say, "I really love you but you're the big brother and you're the big sister and Daddy really needs you. I need you to help out. I need you to do more. I need to be able to depend on you." I'm asking you to be big brothers and sisters.

When we started this church in our living room sixteen years ago, I could know everybody, I can't know everybody anymore. I could love everybody, I can't love everybody anymore. I could greet everybody, I can't greet everybody anymore. If somebody was hurting, I could go visit them and pray for them, but I can't go visit everybody who's hurting and praying anymore.

I really need you to do that. I need you to love this church like a family, and not like a little brother or little sister who's always complaining, but a big brother or big sister who has a different perspective that says, "Well, somebody's got to look out for the needs of others and give generously and pray continually and serve gladly because I'm gonna be a big brother or big sister and I'm gonna look out for the little ones."

And as we move forward, I do believe that our family will grow. I believe we'll have new churches birthed and new people born again in the grace of God. My real concern is, are we gonna have enough big brothers and big sisters to take care of the whole family? You know what I'm talking about?

And so when a church becomes large, there can be a question of motive. "Why? Why do you ask?" Here's why, Mars Hill, let me just be really honest. I really love this family very much and you matter to me very greatly. And I don't like being someone who needs others but I really need you. I need you to pray. I need you to serve. I need you to give. I need you to care. Because this is a great family, amen? And it's a growing family. And for those of you who are faithful big brothers and big sisters, let me say thank you. And for those who are not yet, let me say thank you in advance because I know that that is what you're going to do in the grace of God.

Father God, I pray for us as a church and I thank you that the Lord Jesus came as a big brother. I thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came and that you allowed the magi to worship you. You allowed the magi to give to you because, Jesus, it is glorious to you, but it is good for us to worship and to give to you. Lord Jesus, I thank you for the most fruitful year in the history of Mars Hill Church. It's a great, glorious, complicated extended family, but it's a family. Jesus, we thank you that you're still the big brother at Mars Hill. You're the one who gets more done than any of us. God, I pray for those who have been faithful big brothers and big sisters, that they would continue to help with the work of the family and I pray, Lord God, for those who are not yet taking on that additional responsibility that they would do so gladly. And I pray, Lord God, for those who are not yet Christians that as they see the magi, they would sense that that is your intent for them as well, to search for Jesus, to come to Jesus, to worship Jesus. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you're alive and well, and we thank you that when we see you in the kingdom, we will not smell myrrh. You've defeated sin. You've defeated death and we see what our future holds in your presence and we long for it in your good name. Amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.