

Hope for the Nations

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 2. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men, or magi, came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it arose and have come to 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, 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.

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. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child.

[1 : 08] And when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him. 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. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother. And they fell down and worshipped 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. Amen.

That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Thank you once again, praise team, and kindness in leading us.

[2 : 12] You know this, and it's been said before. The world is constantly looking for hope. We see it in how we root for our favorite teams.

As if we were in the game with them. We hope to be a winner. To feel good about ourselves. And we feel bad when the Cowboys lose.

I mean when our teams lose. We see it in how we argue over politics and candidates. Because we're hoping for a better life, a better nation.

Big Pharma is so effective because Big Pharma offers hope. Hope for healing. Hope for longevity. We see it in how many people are in counseling or psychological therapy.

People hope to feel good. And even in some cases, be better people. Even the addict seeks hope. And whatever gives him or her the high.

[3 : 17] Just to feel released from the burdens of life for a while. To put it simply, human beings live for hope.

And without it, we die. We're naturally hope seekers. But lasting hope eludes us because what we tend to put our hope in is insufficient to give it to us.

Lasting hope I'm talking about. And we put so much effort and resources to seek that which gives us this hope.

And Christmas though. Christmas, Christmas. Christmas is about eternal, everlasting hope. Not about us creating it.

It is God entering our world at the birth of Jesus to give us the true hope that we need.

[4 : 22] Jesus is that hope. Hope. He's that. And remember, the Bible doesn't use hope the way we use the word. We use it as if we're not certain. We hope.

No. The way I'm using hope today and what we're looking for is a certainty. And that's how the Bible uses the word hope. It is a certainty. Something you look forward to something that you know is coming.

That's the biblical version of hope. And that's what we need. Something certain. Something certain that's better than what we got now.

As good as what some of you may have. I'm not denying some of us live well. But as good as you think you have it. It is nothing compared to what's coming in Jesus.

That's a certain hope. And Jesus came to give us that. He is the hope of the world. He is the hope for the nations. But like all forms of hope.

[5 : 24] He must be sought. He must be sought. Come now to these wonderful seekers. And first of all, I want you to notice this.

In the wise men, the magi teach it so wonderfully. Is that hope seeks Christ. It's specific. Hope seeks Christ. First notice this. I'm going to refer to the text. I just read it.

So I'm not going to read everything I just read. Again, because for sake of time. But first notice that the magi arrive after the birth of Christ. It says it right there. In verse 1.

After the birth of Christ. They were not there with the shepherds and the angelic choir. Am I good? Okay. My man. What we call the kresh is not accurate.

They do not appear to be kings either. So we three kings of where we are. They're not kings. They're magi. They're wise men. These men, this text says, come from the east.

[6 : 25] Now let's be honest. We don't know exactly where in the east they came from. There is speculation. There's good speculation though. It seems they were either from Babylon or from Persia.

Babylon had the largest Jewish community at that time though. Would have taken up to four months. Some people, some scholars suggest even longer for them to get to Jerusalem depending how they traveled.

But at least four months. As I own Dr. Carl Ellis first taught me years ago. They would have likely been influenced by the prophet Daniel.

Daniel lived hundreds of years before. But if you read his book, you will find out that he was made leader of the magi of that era.

The magi were astrologers and dream interpreters. And true, we get our word magic from magi, but they weren't magicians.

[7 : 26] More like I said, astrologers. They studied the stars looking for understanding of their times. So yes, we would call them pagan and superstitious. Just like people today who put their trust in their horoscopes and crystals and tarot cards and omens.

When God gave Daniel ability to interpret the dream of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar was greatly impressed with Daniel and Daniel's God.

That's why he made him the leader. You see Daniel chapter 2. The king answered and said to Daniel, Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of lords and a revealer of mysteries. For you have been able to reveal this mystery.

Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel had the spirit of God living in him. He didn't interpret the king's dream. God gave it to him. He was only the mouthpiece. But again, the Lord was with him and he was greatly honored.

[8 : 44] Later when Babylon was conquered by a coalition of the Medes and Persians, King Darius the Mede made a decree concerning Daniel's God after God delivered him from the lion's den.

And so once again, Daniel is being held up and his God by the king of the Persians. So once again, we see Babylon, Persia, these wise men would have inherited that teaching.

Likely Daniel taught them about the coming one in Daniel 7. The great king who would come before the ancient of days and receive the kingdom that no one could destroy.

A kingdom that would never end. Daniel passed this on. I wonder if he passed on Numbers 24, 17, too. I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. It shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Seth.

[9 : 54] Maybe that star. Maybe that he talked about the star. Maybe they took it literally. I don't know. But likely these men were certainly influenced by Daniel.

As I said, this journey would have taken months. What drove them? Why would they? They didn't have cars. They didn't have airplanes. These guys are traveling by camel and mule and donkey.

What drove them to make such a long trip that could have been up to 900 miles? One word drove them. Hope. They were not pursuing a dream.

They were pursuing a person. A person they believed could make huge changes in the world, in their world and in their lives. And here's the thing about the wise men.

These men. They knew he was a babe. They knew he was just being born. So that means they were willing to wait for him to grow up. They were willing to wait.

[10 : 57] They wanted to see, but they were willing to wait. As a matter of fact, it's a good chance. You don't know how old they were, but it's a good chance. They knew they wouldn't see him come into his power. But they had hope for their children and their grandchildren.

That this king could make a difference. This king and his kingdom, the government would be upon his shoulders. And he would be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

They had hope that this king, not their king, they probably saw the corruption of their kings. And the corruption of all kings of the earth. And all presidents of the earth.

And all premiers. And all whatever you call the leader of the government. They saw the corruption. They recognized they needed something better. They needed someone better.

And he came in hope of this king. He is the hope for the nations. The wise men show up to Israel. And their very presence is telling Israel and all the world that Jesus is no tribal deity.

[12 : 09] He's no national God. He's the God of all the earth. And they're saying that he's for all of us. In this very early stage of our Lord's life, he's the hope for all of us.

All nations. Here's the thing. People will go to great lengths, like I said earlier, to pursue hope. Look at these guys. Great lengths. Psychologically, hope is crucial because it provides motivation, resilience, and purpose.

Helping people manage, listen, manage stress. Overcome adversity. Set goals. And believe in a better future. Significantly, boosting mental and physical well-being by fostering positive action, creativity, a sense of meaning.

Even when challenges are real. It is the belief that positive change is possible. And within your ability to influence, preventing stagnation and despair.

That's what hope does for us psychologically. You see how big it is? That four-letter word. I think it's four-letter. Yeah. Four-letter word. And it's huge.

[13 : 27] When you have it. Right. Right. And when what you put your hope in is able to bear the weight of your hope.

Right. Right. Like I said, when people lose hope, that's when they turn to substitutes. Like addictions and fantasies and false personas of themselves on social media and in gaming.

We crave it. We have to have it. We crave it. Reality is hopeless. So people create their own. Isn't that what the apostle Paul said in Ephesians chapter 2 describing us after in verse 11 and following?

He describes the Gentiles as without God and without hope in the world. That's us, people. That's anyone born who breathes air.

We all come into this world not knowing him. And if we never see him. We live all of our lives without true hope.

[14 : 45] And the worst thing to do is to die without hope. Hope. Hope. But again, hope must be sought. Must be sought.

Behold it. Doesn't the Bible say no one, no one seeks God? Right. Romans chapter 3. No one seeks God.

Meaning the one true God. Many seek a God of their own design who will do their bidding. We call that idolatry, by the way. So if someone is seeking the true God, listen, it is because God has sought them first.

God sought out these magi to bring them out of pagan darkness to the light, just like he did Abraham or Abram.

Listen, I can imagine. Can you imagine back home with the magi? Babylon, Persia, wherever they were. They're back home and they're saying, a star has appeared. We remember in the prophecies that Daniel prophet, that great man, Daniel, he prophesied about a star and a king.

[15 : 55] And he said, listen, we got to go check this out, guys. Because it would have been more. It would have been a bunch of magi. All right. By the way, there's nothing that says there were three.

The three gifts don't mean there were three magi. Likely there were more. There were a bunch of these guys. But I digress. They're talking to the other magi.

They're saying, hey, man, we got to go check this out. Now here, I see a possibility. Now stay with me. This is human nature. So you can zone in if you want. But I think you'll find it interesting. I see three groups here. I see three groups.

As they said, we're going to go seek this king. The first group, they would have said, oh, I wish I could go with you guys. Yeah, I could use some hope. Yeah, I wish.

We need better government. We need, yeah. My vote don't count. I believe you're right. I believe you're right. But, you know, I'm really kind of busy right now. I just can't. I don't know.

[16 : 51] I just, I got so much to do. Billy, I just don't have time to go making a 900-mile journey on a camel. We're tied up. So that's one group.

How about group two? You guys are crazy. It's too long and dangerous to make that trip. And what if you're wrong? They're the agnostics.

They don't know if they're right or wrong, but they're not going. Agnostics never seek God. They, they, because they assume, they really are saying it's not true.

But they don't know. That's group two. Now, how about group three? Group three would have been the most negative. If you actually believe some old prophecies of a dead guy, he wasn't even Persian.

This king doesn't exist. Those are the atheists. Yet, with all that, come on, you know it had to happen.

[17 : 58] Something, somebody had to say something. But with all that happening, if they don't experience it, you do. We do. Why are you seeking Christmas?

That's about Santa Claus. What are you talking about this virgin birth stuff then? You're talking about this, this, this God becoming. I mean, come on. Don't mess up my Christmas.

Don't mess up my X-mas. We going to party. We going to give gifts. We going to have a great time. Family coming. It's family time. Don't mess up my Christmas with all this talk about the incarnation and hope for the world and for the nations.

Hope for me. I don't need your hope. Yet, they went anyway. Are you? Are you on your way?

Are you making your way to Bethlehem? Are you making, once again, are you, have you, are you, do you make that trek often? Are you pursuing Christ often?

[19 : 08] Every day, every week, every month, every, are you pursuing? Are you on your way or have you been discouraged from pursuing too? True hope makes you go.

True hope, you can't help yourself. You got hope. You going. You don't care what folks say. You going. You're compelled. And when you see Jesus at Christmas, you can't.

Ah, that's the reward, all the rewards you need. Because the work, that's the work of God's spirit in you. Can I encourage you? Don't fight him. Don't fight him.

Don't let the, I love the decorations. I do. You come to my house. I got three Christmas trees. I got tiny trees as well. I got, I got stuff on the fire.

Man, I went, this year, I got into even more. I got an extra tree that I can't even find where to put. But that's not Christmas.

[20 : 10] If I didn't put up one decoration, no tree, no nothing, I'm pursuing Christ. And you can't stop me.

No one can. He's my hope. Don't fight him if he's calling you. The second point I'll ask for today is, hope in Christ is, and I've been hinting at it, but let's get it into text.

Hope is opposed. It's opposed. And sometimes deceptively. You know, I don't know about you, maybe some of you feel this way, but a lot of people don't like surprise guests.

Especially if they're important guests. Ladies, like having your in-laws show up and you haven't had time to straighten up the house. Especially if you have little kids, you know.

Sandy wants the house perfect if the dog catcher is coming. I mean, really, I got to tell you, I really don't care. I'm sorry, I really don't care. Because if you came to see my house, you're not welcome.

[21 : 19] I hope you came to see me. Because you love me. At least like me. So that's me, but that's not my wife. And that's not everyone. That's Kevin Smith, I know.

King Herod would have been very put out to hear about dignitaries showing up without notice. And look at the text. They didn't come to him right away.

He heard they were asking about the birth of the king of the Jews. Can you imagine the wise men? They're in Jerusalem, right? They're walking around. They're going, they're probably going to people they think might know.

Well, they probably thought everybody knew. Where's the king of the Jews that was born? Have y'all seen? Where can we find the king of the Jews? Hey, excuse me, sir. Excuse me, sir. Hey, stop that guy.

Hey, hey, come here. He wants to talk to you. Yeah, yeah. Can you, where the king? I mean, they're asking around and Herod hears about it. Now listen, this guy was not a nice man.

[22 : 18] I mean, he was, he was insecure and murderous. He had already killed family members whom he thought a threat to his reign. One was a wife, by the way.

And another, I think one of them was a son. And they probably were, by the way. So in verse 3, when the passage says he was troubled, meaning distressed and perplexed, and all Jerusalem with him, that could suggest that the people were distressed because Herod was distressed.

And they knew when Herod got distressed, he'd clench his fist around their throats. It's like when Herod sneezed, the whole country got the flu. And these dignitaries would have come with an entourage.

They came with a posse, y'all. They didn't, they weren't a bunch, just a couple guys, a few guys, five, ten, whatever it was, just walking through the streets. Dressed nice, by the way, you know. But walking, they, no, no, they didn't come like that.

They came with an entourage of camels and packs and tents and guess what? Soldiers. Guards.

[23 : 29] Because that travel, wherever they came from in the east, would have been dangerous. Even with the Roman peace, the Roman roads, there were still people out there who would have saw them and said, money, cheddar coming, baby.

So they show up with an entourage. They show up with a bunch of people. And it's quite a sight. What does that tell us again?

It takes effort and planning to seek Jesus well. I know some people don't want to hear that because that suggests work. Yeah. It sure enough does.

It sure enough does. Seeking Jesus does involve work. It's response to the grace of God that drew you, but you're going to do something.

That's called work. You're not working to be saved. You are being, you are working because you are saved. You've been drawn by the spirit of God.

[24 : 28] And now you are in pursuit of Christ. To seek him well will involve planning and effort on your part. You know, you plan your devotions. If you want to spend time with Jesus, believe me, if you wake up in the morning every day saying, maybe I'll spend, is today a good day?

I don't know. If that's what you're doing, you're not spending time with Jesus likely very often. Because he's not convenient. I don't know about you, but I got to plan my time with the Lord.

I got to go to bed thinking about, okay, what's what we going to do? Lord, I'm going to meet you. I'm going to meet you at, I have to, now, even the Jews did that three times a day. They had prayer times. They planned their devotion.

Do you wake up Sunday morning and decide if you're coming to worship or not? If you do, you don't come very often.

And you may not come very prepared. You see, when we come to gather, when we come to worship, we come for a reason. We come expecting to meet somebody.

[25 : 33] And it's not just Kevin Smith, I hope. Or your neighbor sitting next to you in your pew. This is not a social club. I hope you're planning to come meet fellow believers who will go with you to the feet of Christ.

To sit at the feet of the living God. And declare his glory and worth. I hope that's why we're here. But that took planning. You had to lay out your clothes. If you're smart and you got little kids, you lay them out the night before.

I'm telling you. I lay out my suit the night before, believe it or not. Because I don't want to worry about what I'm going to wear in the morning. But that's just me.

It takes planning. It takes effort. It takes, you're going to have to think about it. They didn't just get on camels and start walking. They had to get this stuff together. Okay, you get that.

You get the salt. You get the pork. You get the... Who's bringing the gifts? Who's bringing... You know, man. They had to work this. They planned this pursuit.

[26 : 38] And the good thing they did. Because they get there and Herod's awaiting. Now, here's the thing.

They go to the house, right? They go to the house. How come Joseph and Mary are still in Jerusalem? I always... I just have a question. I just...

I ask questions, you know? How come they didn't go back to Nazareth? Hmm. Maybe they knew it was trouble. They knew people thought something about them.

Maybe that's why. I don't know. But they're there. They're there still in Jerusalem. After the birth of Jesus. And here the Magi encounter a very subtle and deceptive opposition.

The devil doesn't often show up and tell you it's me. He don't show up and tell you it's me. I'm not telling you the truth. There are no captions, you know?

[27 : 38] Under the devil, right? Under the devil using whoever. There are no captions under the speech, right? You remember the old Joey Zuzu commercials? Oh, yeah.

I don't remember Joey Zuzu. He would say something about the trooper, Zuzu. And under the caption, he would say, he's lying. He played... There was an actor who played this swarmy salesman named Joey Zuzu.

And he would say things like this. You can buy this inexpensive car with your spare change. If you buy this car, there will be a frozen yogurt machine included.

This car gets 300 miles to the gallon. It has more seats than the astronome. Those actual quotes, by the way. When Herod said, go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him, a caption should have popped up and said, he's lying.

I mean, can't you see it? When we read it, because we know, don't you think that right away? He's lying. That boy lying through his teeth. But no caption popped up.

[28 : 47] Which means he's trustworthy. That magi would have taken him at his word. This is why, saints, here we go.

You have to saturate yourselves with God's word, applying it faithfully and prayerfully. Prayerfully seeking the guidance of his spirit at all times.

This is what the Bible calls discernment, slash another synonym of wisdom, but discernment. Discernment is the spirit-empowered ability to distinguish truth from error, good from evil, right from wrong.

And this is spiritual warfare. The magi are, did you know Christmas was spiritual warfare? The magi are being engaged, are being lied to by the devil right there on the spot.

They're being lied to. They're engaged in spiritual warfare, and they didn't even know it. That's how the enemy gets us. We're not, our eyes aren't open.

[29 : 51] Hebrews 5.14, but solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Do you catch it? Solid food, meaning the word of God, the theology of the word, the word of God. That's for the mature. That's why we got to grow up. That's why we can't, ignorance is not bliss in the kingdom of God.

Romans 12.2, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, because the mind and the heart are connected, by the way.

Renewing the mind leads to renewal of the heart, the whole inner being. That by testing, you may, look at this, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

You see, they were being tested. And so are you. I wonder if Christmas is actually really a test.

[31 : 00] And certainly a temptation from the enemy. Are you aware? Do you recognize this is, we're engaged in spiritual warfare.

We are celebrating the incarnation, the birth of the son of God, God in human flesh come among us. Listen, that's not something the devil wants you to hold on to. He wants you to be sad.

He wants you to be worn out from Christmas shopping. He wants you to be distracted by all the tensile. How much, how much prayer have you sought the Lord at any point during this Christmas season?

Let me tell you, if you're like me, you got to fight for it. How many of you wiped out physically, emotionally, wiped out?

It's supposed to be a celebration of Christ. Why are we so wiped out? Because we've been sucker punched. If you are wiped out and stressed out because it's Christmas, you've been sucker punched.

[32 : 07] You fell for the lie. Because we should be the most joyous of people right now. We should be so joyous, we should be kicking our heels up. We should be walking down the street, skipping and singing.

People think we own drugs. But we're not, we're stressed. That's not how you celebrate the birth of Jesus. I'm laughing because I'm laughing at myself.

Now listen, I'm going to finish up here. Herod does deserve one well done. I got to give one. He got one thing right. He really did. When he heard about the Magi's search, he called in the Bible teachers.

Chief priests and scribes. And asked them where the Messiah, where the Christ was to be born. Boom. Give him a point for that. Just one though. He's in the negative category.

Just give him one point. And here's the kicker. Do you see it? They knew. They didn't go, we don't know. We can't find it.

[33 : 11] No, they knew. They quoted from the prophet Micah. Micah 5.2 is the quote that they have in the text about Bethlehem. Bethlehem, land of Judah. They know.

They know. In Micah 5.1 to 5, it's the context of the whole thing. It's about warfare. It's about God sending a shepherd.

God sending one who will defeat, one who will reign, one who will defeat the enemies of his people. That's what that's about. A real ruler.

A real president. He's going to come. And here's the thing. He's coming to defeat the real enemies. Not nations.

Not the Democrats. Not the Republicans. He's not coming to defeat them. He's going to defeat everybody. He all messed up.

[34 : 08] He said, all of y'all are corrupt. He's coming to defeat our enemies. The sin, death, and Satan. That attacks all of us and lives in all of us. And they knew where he would be born.

And they tell Herod. They tell him the truth. But those who opposed the seeking of Christ do not care about truth. Herod wanted to know so that he could crush Christmas.

That's the nature of the evil one. He will say, I'm on your side. But his whole idea is to crush your faith. It's to crush you.

And your family. If you're teaching them the way of the Lord, crush them too. He was to crush our churches. He was to crush the remnant. But anything that testifies to the reality of who Christ is, the devil is opposing it and wants to crush it.

To put it to death. Because the enemy has blinded. He has blinded those who are not in Christ.

[35 : 23] So they can't see the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Chapter 4.

He's blinded them. And we were blind too. You didn't unblind yourself. That was the work of the Spirit of God and the grace of God coming to get you. God, like he drew you, like he drew the magi.

He sent a star up and he drew you to the star. He drew you to the cradle. And then pointed toward the cross. Because without the cross, the cradle does nothing for us.

We've got to have both. We've got to have both. Well, Christmas, believe it or not, is God's declaration of war.

Jesus has come to lay it down, literally. And to win the battle. Christmas is a declaration of war.

[36 : 36] That the enemy of our souls doesn't want us to see. He wants to be preoccupied with other things. He's blinded the minds of unbelievers in this world. But we are supposed to be Christ's light.

Let's point them to the light. Let's not get ourselves distracted. Let the devil distract us and make us miserable like everybody else. Let's seek him.

He is life. He is light. Seek him. He is our hope. It is in finding him that we get discernment and wisdom.

That we can now understand life. Listen, listen, listen. It takes effort. Yes. The wisdom that comes to us at Christmas must be sought.

Must be sought in him. When speaking about wisdom, the Bible says, Seek her as silver and search for her as hidden treasure. His with Christ is our wisdom, our discernment.

[37 : 36] Have you noticed that silver and hidden treasures are located underneath the ground? Have you noticed that? Where do you find silver normally? And gold. It's usually in the ground.

They're not laying on top of the ground. It requires digging. That's why they're hidden.

Because they're underneath. You got to dig for it. Why would God not make wisdom available for anyone to just pick it up easily? Why are we called to search?

It's because it's too valuable. He doesn't want people to pick it up who don't intend on using it. God places wisdom as a hidden treasure underneath the ground for those who really want it.

Just like people who truly desire to found gold don't mind digging and working to find it. Wisdom is only to be found by people who value it enough to search for it.

[38 : 43] The wisdom that comes to us at Christmas that gives us hope for this life and the life to come is a wisdom that must be sought so that we can see the world.

We have discernment. We can see the world the way God sees it. Christmas opens up reality. It opens up the world to us. But he must be sought.

You don't sit home and channel surf and find it. It's going to take some putting aside some of that stuff sometime and spending time in the living word of God and on our face before God, crying out to God for mercy and insight and understanding.

Why do we keep making the same mistakes over and over again? We lack wisdom. Christ is Christ. Amen. And Christmas is God's gift of discernment and wisdom to us.

It's God's gift of hope to us. But listen, I want to be like the two blind men in Matthew chapter 20. Jesus was walking by and they cry out, son of David, have mercy on us.

[39 : 54] Son of David, have mercy on us. And they're crying out. And the people say, be quiet. The master's busy. Be quiet. Be quiet. And he keep crying out, son of David, have mercy.

And Jesus stopped. Is anybody crying out anymore?

Is anybody crying out anymore? Son of David. Son of David. Hope. You know, hope comes in the crying.

Don't stop crying out. Hope comes in the crying. Jesus stops to hear them. And he will hear you this Christmas.

As you cry out to him. To deal away with the stress. Get your eyes off of the tree. Much as I love trees. Don't worry about who you didn't get a present for.

[41 : 01] We all stressed out because you didn't get a present for Aunt Bessie. And she's going to be mad. And you didn't get your kid the favorite toy they wanted. See, we're teaching them something.

What is Christmas about? You getting your favorite toy. I'm sorry, family. If we want to celebrate Christmas, let's celebrate Christ.

And teach our children to celebrate Christ. And get our minds and hearts lined up with Christ. And the hope that he gives us in life and death. Let's get lined up with Jesus.

Come on, folks. Come on, people. I want to encourage you to come to Christmas service, too. I know. It's Christmas Day. It's our tradition. Elders, will you come on down? Please.

It's our tradition. We have Christmas Day service. I know that's so inconvenient. I know. I know. But what? I mean, I was going to change it, y'all. When I got here 13 years ago, Christmas Day service.

[42 : 02] We ain't having no Christmas Day service. I'm serious. I was going to change it. And then I showed up. And 100 people were sitting there in worship. And God slapped me.

Don't you touch a thing. Yes, sir. Christmas Day. Why? Duh, Kev. I wasn't thinking. Christmas Day.

What a time to be in worship for one hour. Christmas Day. I'm sorry. I'm pastoring now.

If you got guests in your house, invite them to come with you. Or, listen, listen.

Tell them you'll be back in an hour. You're making a statement. Are you feeling me?
You're making a statement. You're telling them that they're not more important than your worship.

[43 : 02] Right. It kills me when people. We do this all the time. People show up at our house on Sunday morning. We can't come to church. Because we got guests. So you just told them they're more important than your worship.

Now they're sick and need help. That's, you know, mercy's thing. Amen. But come on, y'all. Think about it. I'm just saying think about it. I'm just saying think about it. Don't shoot me.

But think about it. Christmas is about Christ. Everybody else, come along for the ride. I want to see Jesus. I want to see Jesus.

Today and every day. I want to see. But I really. But Christmas, come on. I want to see Jesus. I love you. Like seeing you. I want to see Jesus. I love my daughters.

They're coming home. If they don't come, I'm going to see Jesus. I'm serious. I do that. In a heartbeat. I'm going to see Jesus.

[44 : 08] Father. We've been tricked. And. And we want. We want to get out of this trap.

I hope we do. And we want to see Jesus this Christmas. So will you open our eyes to see him. We open our eyes. Open our hearts to want him.

Don't. No. Let's not. I don't want the magi to be better at seeking Christ in me. Because I know more than they do. You've shown us so much. That they didn't even know.

So help us. To see Jesus this Christmas like never before. And even as you come to the table. Lord. Help us to see Jesus. In his name we pray.

Amen.