

“WORSHIP FULLY!”  
by Rom A. Pegram (12/6/20)

There was a musical that came out some time back that I truly enjoyed (thanks to my wife’s encouragement). And, in that musical, there was a song that came to mind as I was preparing for today’s message. From Rogers & Hammerstein’s ‘The King and I,’ the song was called ... GETTING TO KNOW YOU. Do you remember the song? (I’m guessing it’s running through some of your heads right now...)

Getting to know God ... is what true worship is all about. And the more we get to know God, the more we’ll come to LOVE GOD. But it takes time to get to know God—to know if he’s our ‘cup of tea,’ doesn’t it? Today, we’re going to be talking about *Worshiping Fully* ... in our lives. I decided to start with this message, since worshipping fully is our main goal for the season. We’re going to enter into the Christmas story to learn to do that, so let’s begin here—today’s Bible reading from the Gospel of Luke. *Listen carefully to what was going on with Mary (Luke 1:26-38, NLT)...*

**In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee,<sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.<sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”<sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.<sup>30</sup> “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God!<sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.<sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”<sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”<sup>35</sup> The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.<sup>36</sup> What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she’s now in her sixth month.<sup>37</sup> For nothing is impossible with God.”<sup>38</sup> Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.**

Folks, if we truly want to get back to the Christ of Christmas—to the stable—and worship the Christ-child this Christmas, we need to enter Christmas:

**THROUGH THE INVITATION: MARY.** In other words, *we need to worship like Mary during this season...*

Mary was a teenage girl ... engaged to be married to a poor carpenter by the name of Joseph. She lived on the dusty fringe of the Roman Empire—just *another powerless peasant* living in an insignificant town (that is, until God got involved). But she was *the young woman to whom God extended an invitation*—an invitation to become the mother of the Messiah, our Savior...

In Luke's account, it was the angel Gabriel who came to her and let her know that she—lowly, young Mary, had found favor with God. She was to give birth to a child, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and she was to name him Jesus...

So, what was Mary's response to the invitation (v. 38a)? Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." *Her response was simple ... yet inspiring.* What an attitude! What a Godly attitude!!

Then, what does Mary do after responding in such a glorious way? Mary worships... through song... Folks, let me remind you ... we do this every time we get together and worship—lift God up to his rightful place in our lives through music. A couple weeks back, I'd mentioned how important music is to our worship and how blessed we are to have good musicians here at Trinity; worship wouldn't be the same without music; it's a wonderful medium to express ourselves in worship to God.

So, joining the rich tradition of Jewish poets and prophets, Mary composes a song in devotion to her Lord (Luke 1:46-55); and scripture reveals to us that Mary responded in this way:

**"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.**

**<sup>47</sup> How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!**

**<sup>48</sup> For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed.**

**<sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.**

**<sup>50</sup> He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.**

**<sup>51</sup> His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.**

**<sup>52</sup> He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble.**

**<sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.**

**<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful.**

**<sup>55</sup> For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."**

'Any songwriters here? 'Not bad for a teenage girl, was it? Mary's song is known as *the Magnificat* ... because through it she *magnifies* God, giving full attention to him as she *worships* him fully. How can we join in Mary's Magnificat? Folks, with Mary as our example: *let poets pen odes*; maybe we do have some songwriters in our midst; *let musicians compose songs*; work together with the poets to write songs of praise & worship; and *let prophets direct us to see what God sees: the birth of his Son means the beginning ... of the end ... of injustice!* We too need to worship God fully ... in honor of that. We also need to enter the Christmas story this year, not just THROUGH THE INVITATION (Mary), but...

**THROUGH THE HOLY DRAMA: JOSEPH.** *We need to worship like Joseph during this season, and we talked about this last week (Matthew 1:18-25)—worship through obedience...*

Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, has a problem. His fiancée is pregnant ... and the baby isn't his. In Joseph's world, *this was beyond unthinkable!* Joseph could've exposed Mary to public shame, not to mention punishment. But he decided to break it off quietly—an honorable man in every way...

Then the angel showed up. In a dream (Do you remember this?), a messenger of God appeared to Joseph to let him know that *this wasn't really about him*. It was about something much bigger ... and *it was God's plan!* Joseph was *not* to break off the engagement. Why? Because *the baby Mary was carrying was of God ...* and God needed Joseph to help raise this child—whose name was to be Jesus, meaning 'salvation' or, basically, 'God to the rescue!'

Any way Joseph looked at it, what was going on here was HUGE! *And the way Joseph worshiped fully ... was to be obedient to what God called him to do*, whether he totally understood it or not (by faith)! Joseph's part in the Christmas story reminds us that *while the call of God isn't always easy or conventional ... it's always right!* *We too need to worship God through our obedience this season*—worshiping the Christ-child fully in faith! We also need to enter the Christmas story...

**THROUGH RESPONDING TO THE CALL: THE SHEPHERDS.** Luke 2:15 says, "When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, 'Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'" Folks, *we need to worship like the shepherds during this season...*

Another angel brought the Good News of Jesus' birth to the shepherds. These particular shepherds, just to remind you, were:

- The third-shift workers of their day, despised by most people—largely shunned by the mainstream population...
- Considered thieves by many ... unfit for more respectable occupations...
- Not allowed to testify in a court of law—*they were that untrustworthy...*

So, these shepherds ... who found their place on the outskirts of Bethlehem ... were the *motley crew* God chose to share the Good News with *first!*

*We're reminded by the shepherds that we're loved by a God who sees the overlooked in society. He looks at our hearts, not our status...* Well, immediately after hearing from God, the shepherds went to find the manger—to witness the miracle for themselves ... and they continued to *worship* even after the angels left (Luke 2:15). So, let's enter into the Christmas story this year by fully giving of ourselves in worship in this way, taking steps of FAITH ... even after the excitement of the season has gone! Then, let's learn to enter the Christmas story...

**EVEN FROM A GREAT DISTANCE: THE WISE MEN.** From Matthew 2:1-2, we read: "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.'" *We need to worship like the wise men during this season...*

The Magi (as the Wise Men were called) ... were not from here. They were not 'locals.' Did you know that? They weren't just going across town to take part in a worship service that first Christmas night. It was much more involved than that; there was a much greater investment in the worship of the newborn baby for them ... in these ways:

- They made a long & dangerous journey (over hundreds of miles), risking their lives to go to a faraway place to worship the King!
- When they found him, they didn't just throw a buck at him and decide that was good enough for Jesus; instead, they offered him costly gifts...

These men were not playing the worship games that many play today; these gifts of gold and precious spices nearly cost them their lives before Herod...

Folks, this year—if we're to worship Jesus fully, *our worship must be reborn*. The wise men show us what happens when someone gets a glimpse of just how worthy Christ is! So, the question this year is this: *Will we—no matter the difficulty of the journey or task—go to any length to meet him, and give our all for our King?*

When we think of those less fortunate than we are during this season, what is that worth? Is it worth some sacrifice on our part ... that someone less fortunate could receive a gift of LOVE and FAITH? As I've stated previously, Christmas isn't as easy for many ... as it is for us; but we can respond to their need in a very biblical way, can't we? Again, Proverbs 3:27 says, "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it's in your power to help them." The wise men knew it was in their power to go the distance, to worship, and to bring gifts of LOVE to the Christ child. We also have opportunities to reach out to those who deserve better, but absolutely have no means. We're one of the wealthiest nations on this planet ... and I believe God's counting on us...

Folks, as we go through this season, we need to begin to take a deeper look at our lives—not only individually, but as a church body—and be honest about who or what it is that we're really worshiping this season. If the answer is Jesus, then the world won't have too much trouble figuring that out—that Jesus *is* WHO we're all about—that Jesus Christ is the one we *worship fully*—not just here at home, but to the ends of the earth...

***Like Mary, we will sing to our redeeming God. Like Joseph, we will obey without regard to the cost. Like the shepherds, we will leave our busyness to worship Christ. And like the Magi, we will confront anything that stands in the way of our worship, whether worldly powers ... or our own fears. Let's be about worshiping Christ fully this season ... in all that we do! Let's put our FAITH there. The only One we can fully trust ... is the One who should be getting our full attention—our full worship!***