**SUNDAY, 1/2/22**

**SERMON**

**MATTHEW 2:1-12**

Jeremy was no more than seven years old.

It was time to go to Church for worship.

He picked up his favorite teddy bear, which he had always called Frank.

His parents protested, but he insisted that he had to take Frank, today,

 and they finally relented.

When the offering plate was passed,

 he put Frank the teddy bear in the plate, along with a few coins.

On their way home his parents asked about the teddy bear in the offering plate.

He told them: "Well, the Bible says the wise men brought Jesus gifts:

 gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

 I don't have any gold.

 And I don't know what myrrh is.

 So I just gave Frank and cents!"

The story of the wise men is a story which is a mysterious story.

As we read the Bible story,

 we discover there are a lot of questions we cannot answer.

For example:

 How many Wise Men were there? We don't really know.

 Who were they? We are not sure.

 Where did they come from? We don't know.

 How long did their journey take? We don't know.

They seem to just show up mysteriously

And just as mysteriously they are gone.

The story of The Wise Men can teach us about seeking God.

They were astrologers who knew and understood the stars and planets.

The Wise Men paid attention to what was happening around them.

They noticed a strange new star amongst all the other familiar stars.

They saw the star and they were determined followed it.

It was not an easy journey.

The journey required faith, and great effort,

 and determination to complete the trip.

Imagine their friends' and family's reaction when they saw them packing:

“Are you going on a journey?" "Yes.”

“Where are you going?" "We don't know for sure.”

“How far is it?" "Well we don't know that either.”

“How long are you going to be gone?”

“Well were not quite sure about that either.”

“We have seen His star, and we are going to find Him.”

The Wise Men went through great lengths in their search for the newborn King.

They were willing to do whatever it took to find Him.

They were willing to go however long it required.

The term "Wise Men" implies they were men who had gained some wisdom.

Wisdom might be defined as the ability to apply knowledge

 in order to make good judgements

Wisdom is taking what you know, and putting it into action.

It is a combination of knowledge and positive action.

Wisdom is knowledge in action.

It isn't a neutral or passive thing.

So the Wise Men put their wisdom into action.

And so they went on a journey to discover the new born King.

They didn't quit, they didn't give up, until they found Him.

After they had encountered Jesus, and worshiped Him,

 God told the Wise Men to go home a different way.

When we encounter Jesus, we, too, will go home another way.

We are changed, and our lives are changed, and we begin live God's way.

Christmas is an amazing holiday.

It is all about giving.

God gave His best.

Shouldn't we give our best to Him?

What are we giving to God?

What in the world can we possibly give in return for what He has given us?

We give Him what we have, what is precious to us,

 even if it is only a treasured teddy bear named Frank,

 and the few coins we have.

We give Him our worship, our gratitude, and our actions.

God was the giver of the first Christmas gift when He gave His Son to us.

God gave us the greatest gift imaginable.

Jesus was sent, not only to offer us salvation,

 but also so that we could see and understand God more clearly.

There is no greater gift.

He shall be called "Immanuel" — which means, "God with us."

An African boy listened carefully as his teacher explained

 why Christians give presents to each other on Christmas day.

"The gift is an expression of our joy over the birth of Jesus,

 and our love for each other," she said.

When Christmas day came,

 the boy brought the teacher a very beautiful seashell.

"Where did you ever find such a beautiful shell?" the teacher asked.

The youth told her that there was only one spot

 where such extraordinary shells could be found.

When he named the place, a certain bay several miles away,

 the teacher was greatly surprised.

"The shell is so beautiful," she exclaimed.

 "It is so gorgeous, so wonderful!

 But you shouldn't have gone all that way to get the gift for me."

His eyes brightened, and he smiled a happy smile,

 as he said, "Long walk was part of gift."

It was not the gift as much as what it took to get it.

We live in a troubled and difficult world.

Yet God is still with us, leading and guiding us, loving and forgiving us.

And wise ones still seek Him.

Amen