

Seek Wisdom Today

✝ **beyond the wise and powerful (vv.1-8)**

☩ **with joyful gifts (vv.9-12)**

In the name of Jesus who is **Wisdom** from God, dearly redeemed travelers:

How far would you travel to see someone you love? The first time I met my wife, I was really going to see my sister at the college where they both attended. It was an eight-hour drive by car. After that, because our homes were so far apart, we had to travel by airplane to see each other. On my first teaching trip, two of my former students traveled by train, one for eight hours, the other for thirteen. I was so honored to see them. It was not really because of me that they came. We share a Loved One who came from heaven to be our Friend and Savior. He made an impossible journey to free us from all loneliness, fear and anxiety. He came to restore our friendship with God. No plane or train could carry Him. But the Holy Spirit did, through the womb of the virgin Mary. He is God's Son. His Name is Jesus. He not only brings wisdom, Jesus is **Wisdom** from God. When you know Jesus, you know why we are here and where we are going. How far would you go to meet Jesus? God invites you to **Seek Wisdom Today**.

✝ **beyond the wise and powerful (vv.1-8)**

If you have to travel by air these days, you probably notice that the seats are getting smaller and harder. Crowded airplanes make long flights seem even longer. But maybe we're just getting soft and spoiled. Even if you have to walk a lot to catch a bus or ride a train, very few of us know what it's like to ride many miles on a horse or a camel. Getting ready to travel for three weeks is a big challenge. Image three months or years. Why would you go to all that trouble?

Some people will travel many, many miles and even move their whole family to get a good job. But why would anyone leave home because he saw a star in the sky? It must have been a very special star. How would the Magi know about a star in the east, possibly as far away as Babylon?

Maybe Daniel told them centuries earlier. Daniel was a wise man in Babylon who could interpret dreams. Daniel knew what a miracle from God **Wisdom** really is. To understand our own dreams can be very difficult. Understanding someone else's dreams? Almost impossible. But to understand someone's dream without that person telling you the dream is impossible. Only God can read someone else's mind. And God gave special **Wisdom** to Daniel many centuries before Christ. Daniel could tell the king his dream and then interpret it for him too. Everyone knew such **Wisdom** only comes from God. (Daniel 2)

Daniel had even greater **Wisdom** from the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. The Bible tells us who the true God is. The Bible tells us about a Savior from sin. Daniel shared this **Wisdom** from God with his fellow wise men. He told them about Jesus the Savior whom God promised through the Jewish people. One ancient prophecy Daniel could tell his friends came from the fourth book of Moses: *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel."* (Numbers 24:17 NIV84) That star prophecy was about the most important person who ever lived.

The star was a miracle. It kept the Magi riding on hard camels for many weeks. Finally they had to stop and ask for directions. Most people might be friendly, but not King Herod. He was a very jealous man. Herod was so afraid of losing his throne that he killed his favorite wife Mariamne and her two boys. Herod could make a lie sound like the truth. When Jewish religious leaders quoted the prophecy, Herod used God's truth for his own lie. God said, *"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."* Herod secretly called the Magi, found out the exact time the star appeared, then asked a favor:

“Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” Herod did not want to worship Jesus. Herod wanted to kill Jesus.

For a wicked king to kill in order to keep his throne is not surprising. The Bible tells about other kings like Saul who tried for several years to kill David. A jealous king we can understand, but what about the Jewish religious leaders? Why did the chief priests and teachers of the law not go with the wise men to Bethlehem. Didn't they want to see the newborn King? Didn't they **Seek God's Wisdom**?

Can you see the first lesson here for us **Today**? The Holy Spirit is telling us to **Seek Wisdom Today**. God never tells us to wait until tomorrow. He always says, **“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”** (Psalm 95:7; Hebrews 3:7; 4:7 NIV84) Even if you were a powerful king like Herod, or a very smart scholar like the scribes, or a very important religious leader like the Jewish high priests, you cannot not find true **Wisdom** until you find Jesus. Rulers are a wonderful blessing from God to take care of our bodies, to provide law and order. God wants us to respect them. God also wants us to respect church leaders as they care for our souls. But look at what the Magi had to do in order to **Seek God's Wisdom**. The wise men had to keep looking **beyond the wise and powerful**. They had to see Jesus.

with joyful gifts (vv.9-12)

King Herod was only pretending that he wanted to worship Jesus. But you can tell that the Magi were not pretending at all. For many miles they had followed the special star God gave to lead them to the Messiah, the Son of God. When they saw the star again, **“they were overjoyed.”** God used the star to lead them right to the house in Bethlehem where Joseph had moved his wife Mary and stepson Jesus.

Mary was a very devout young virgin who was willing to suffer disgrace to be the mother of God's Son. Joseph was a righteous man who first planned to divorce Mary quietly because he knew her Baby was not his. But Joseph also believed God's Word through the angel that Mary's Baby was the Son of God. Imagine Mary talking to Joseph in Bethlehem: “We are so very poor. How can we pay the rent? How can we buy food and clothing? How will we travel home? God will take care of us, but how?”

Mary stops because she hears a knock on the door. Joseph opens it to see three or more – We don't know how many wise men came. But they were all smiling. They all had treasure chests, boxes filled with very expensive gifts for Jesus. First, they fell down on their knees, their faces to the ground in worship of their newborn King. Then they were so excited to open their treasures and give Jesus some of the most expensive gifts ever. Gold was very valuable then too! Frankincense burned so long and smelled so good that kings wanted it to make their palaces smell good. Doctors could use frankincense for medicinal plasters. And myrrh was very valuable for perfume, ointment and mouthwash. Mary and Joseph could sell these gifts to help them take care of their Baby King, God own Son.

See how the Magi teach us to **Seek Wisdom Today**? We come **with joyful gifts** even though we are all very poor in God's sight. No matter how much money we have, God's law shows us our sins against God. No amount of money can buy God's holiness. All the gold in the world could not buy one minute of His righteousness or a tiny bit of His love. God demands that we love Him with all our heart and soul and mind. But sometimes we are afraid of God instead of loving Him. God commands us to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. But we always we think of ourselves instead of people in need around us. We are all so poor before God. We have nothing to give Him.

But God gives us everything. Most of all, God gave the best, the most expensive Gift when He gave His Son Jesus to be our Savior. This Gift of **Wisdom** from God is free. Jesus is our beautiful Savior. Jesus gave us God's forgiveness by dying on the cross in our place. Jesus gave us God's righteousness by living a perfect life in our place. Now He gives us peace with God as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts through Word and sacrament. God's love for us makes us love our neighbor too. Jesus is **Wisdom** beyond wisdom. All our gifts we give with thankfulness and joy because God loved us first. **Beyond the wise and powerful, with joyful gifts, Seek the Lord in Wisdom Today.** Amen.