

Heavy Load **Matthew 2:1-12**

Introduction

- I don't know about you, but I get really excited for Christmas until I think about getting all the decorations up.
 - Pull out the tree
 - Decorate the tree
 - Pull out the wreaths, candles, garland, etc.
- If you put decorating off, Christmas comes fast and before you know it you are in a rush to at least put up a tree and then you have to take it all down.
- We have a crawl space that we put all of our Christmas decorations in.
 - A crawl space only works if you can actually crawl through it
 - Over the course of a year there's a lot of things that accumulate in our crawl space
 - Each time something gets put in the crawl space, the Christmas decorations get shoved further to the back
 - You can probably figure out what happens when it comes time to decorate, everything has to come out of the crawl space in order to get to the Christmas decorations
- Last year I had a smart moment
 - I cleaned out the entire crawl space and put all the decorations to one side
 - When it came time to decorate, it wasn't nearly as difficult to get the tree, wreaths, candles and garland out
 - Our decorating went pretty smooth and we had most everything up in one night
- This Christmas Year we are focusing on the journey to Bethlehem
 - Decorating is part of the journey
 - We have to do it every year
 - It's nice once its done
 - But it can be a challenge sometimes to get motivated
 - Most of us have been on the journey of Christmas before
 - Much like decorating, the journey to Christmas can be so overwhelming that by the time we reach our destination its over and time to start something new.
 - Two questions for our journey
 - What is your guiding light?
 - What are the heavy loads that you are carrying on your journey?
 - We need some perspective for our Christmas journey
- The Wise Men
 - Astrologers who saw a light, became curious as they looked up to heaven and wondered if whatever was going on in heaven might have an impact on earth.
 - Set out on a journey to Jerusalem to inquire of the king and his men as to whether this star might point to the Jewish Messiah

- If it did, they wanted to worship the arrival of the Newborn King
- **Matthew 2:7-10**
- They had no idea that their inquiry would open up “a can of worms” so to speak
 - King Herod became afraid that his role as King would be threatened
 - Despite the King’s request to return with information about the possibility of a new king, the wise men followed the star to the home of Jesus’ family.
 - They carried with them gifts to honor Jesus
 - Despite the obstacles that Herod may have tried to put in their way, the wise men were not distracted from their purpose
- We are all on a journey this Christmas
 - Will we allow the guiding light of Jesus to lead us to the destination that God intends for us?
 - OR, will the heavy loads that we might be carrying with us create obstacles for reaching the destination?

Lay the Burden Down

- Illustration of Hiking Backpack
 - I mentioned last week about hiking at the Grand Canyon
 - On one of the first overnight hiking trips I packed all the essentials that I could think of
 - Tent
 - Sleeping pad
 - Sleeping bag
 - Food
 - Water
 - Extra clothes
 - Etc.
 - The hike was 12 miles one way; so about 24 miles total
 - Within the first mile, I realized that my pack was too heavy to carry
 - My shoulders hurt, my back was beginning to ache
 - There was no way I would make it down, and definitely no way I was going to make it back up
 - The person I was hiking with suggested that I might need to adjust the straps on my backpack
 - So we adjusted the backpack by lifting the weight off my shoulders and tightening the straps so that the weight was no longer pulling on my back, but sitting higher on my hips.
 - I was still carrying the same weight, but it felt like the load was lighter and definitely a lot easier to carry.
 - Needless to say, I made it down to the bottom of the canyon and back up the next day without the heavy load being a distraction.
 - I wonder if any of you feel this way as you walk this journey toward Christmas

- Many of us assume that Christmas is a joyous season, but it can also be a difficult season of emotions, distractions, and exhaustion.
 - Jesus' birth was not joyful news to everyone even in the Gospels
 - Herod- concerned about his kingship
 - High Priests and Scribes- afraid
 - Mary and Joseph- this wasn't part of their plans; life threatening news
 - Wise Men encountered obstacles in their journey simply to worship Jesus.
- What do we do with the heavy loads we carry during this season of Christmas?
 - **Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) "Come to me, all who labor and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden it light."**
 - *Come to me*
 - Jesus calls us to come
 - Excuses
 - Too much to carry
 - Too many obstacles
 - We stop far short of the destination because allow the burdens and distractions to keep us from coming to Jesus
 - Wise men
 - They went
 - Carried with them their gifts
 - Didn't allow King Herod's alternative motives to stop them
 - Illustration of Hiking Backpack
 - Adjusted how we were carrying the weight
 - Gave some of the weight to the person I was hiking with
 - There were some things we didn't even need
 - Despite the heavy load we were committed to our destination
 - *Come to me and I will give you rest*
 - I really believe that this is what Christmas is all about
 - We get to the end of the year
 - We've collected a lot of stuff, like in my crawl space
 - We have this invitation to take a journey to celebrate our Savior's birth
 - BUT, The heavy loads we are carrying have the potential to keep us from reaching our destination.
 - If we would take in the simplicity of Salvation being wrapped in humility and love nestled in all places such as a manger, we might find life's burdens a little lighter.
 - What do we do with the heavy loads we might be carrying on our journey?
 - We make some adjustments in order to make room for Jesus

- We keep walking toward the destination
- We lay the burdens down at the feet of Jesus
- *And you will find rest for your souls.*

Look Back and Look Forward at the Promises of God

- Advent
 - By its definition *Advent* means the preparation of the coming of Jesus
 - Lighting the Advent Wreath is part of a Christian Tradition with deep meaning
 - The Evergreen Wreath reminds us of the everlasting life that Jesus invites us to receive
 - The lighting of the candles represent the Light that Jesus brings to our dark world
 - Each candle represents the true meaning of Christmas
 - Love
 - Joy
 - Peace
 - Hope
 - The center Candle is reserved for Christmas Eve- the Christ candle
- As we identify our heavy burdens Advent can help us in two ways
 - Preparation of the coming of Jesus
 - Look Back- 1st coming- promises fulfilled
 - Look Forward- 2nd coming- anticipate that what God has done in the past, we will do again!
 - So while we wait with anticipation for Christ to come
 - We hold on to what Christ has already done
 - Realize that in the name of Jesus *Emmanuel* that God is with us!
- I'm not trying to dismiss the heavy burdens that we might be carrying
 - They are real
 - But when the load keeps us from moving toward our destination, we've got rethink our approach to our journey
 - Christmas isn't just about looking back, but looking forward with the assurance that what God has done in the past, He will do again.
 - The journey we take to Christmas, is a journey toward the future promises of God.

Trade Your Burdens for Gifts

- **Matthew 2:11-12**
 - **SONG!!!!**
 - The Wise Men carried with them three gifts that were fit for a King
 - Gold- a precious metal that represented kingship
 - Frankincense- a perfume or incense that represented the intercessory role of a priest

- Myrrh- an anointing oil that represented the anointing of his purpose of the cross.
- Lots of distracts that could have kept the Wise Men from their destination
 - They traded their burdens for gifts to the king
 - They came with no other agenda but to worship
- Is it possible that we could trade our burdens for the gifts of Christmas
 - Love- God and others
 - Joy- Salvation
 - Peace- God is with Us
 - Hope – that what God has done in the past, he will do again!
- We need a guiding light so that our heavy load doesn't distract us from getting to our destination

Conclusion

- What will you do with your heavy load?
 - Will you allow it to distract you from your destination?
 - Will you allow the guiding light of Jesus to lead you, and come to Jesus and find rest?
- Trade your burdens for the gifts of Christmas
 - Love
 - Joy
 - Peace
 - Hope
- **Matthew 2:9-10**