

**Wanted: Happy People**  
**From the Series, "Holiday Season Want Ads"**  
**By Phil Brainerd**  
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**Introduction**

Years ago, the Burger King company ran an advertisement that featured a song with the following words:

Hold the pickles; hold the lettuce.  
Special orders don't upset us.  
All we ask is that you let us serve it your way.  
Have it your way – have it your way.

There are two parts to this. First, the idea. Burger King was responding to their main competitor, McDonald's. McDonalds at the time was very rigid when they produced hamburgers. Every burger looked exactly the same - No difference. Every burger had a pickle, ketchup, mustard, onion, lettuce.

As it turns out, not everyone was completely happy with those ingredients. Burger King decided that they could make customers happy by letting customers pick the ingredients. Why? Because happy customers means profits.

But, there's a second part to this. In order to have happy customers, you need happy servers.

This song was sung by a woman dressed in a Burger King outfit - And she looked very happy.



Imagine though, that you walked up to the counter and asked for something special - Something that required some extra effort. Then imagine that the server got mad at you for asking. That would never work.

I once had an experience at a burger place with an unhappy server. It wasn't a burger king - it was another fast-food restaurant. It was relatively late, around 8:45 PM. The restaurant closed at 9. I made it just in time, or so I thought. I was greeted by a young lady who looked decidedly like she didn't want to be there. She looked like she had been waiting out the clock. Maybe, if no one came, she could sneak out a few minutes early? Then, some rotten customer walked in to ruin her plans. It was late, and I was hungry. That's a bad combination. I said something to the order of, "I know you don't want to be here, but I'm really hungry!" I tried to be as polite as I could, but I don't know how it came out.

Now, understand something: In our last session, we talked about peace and the way that it can help us to be calm. This server was calm. She just wasn't happy.

All businesses want happy customers. That means they need happy workers. We're in our advent season series, "Holiday Season Want Ads". Here's our ad for this week:

"Wanted: Happy People".

Everyone wants to be happy. Who wants to be sad? But as good as it is to be happy, the Bible offers us something more. In the Advent season we celebrate four themes: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Today, we're looking at "Joy".

The New international version of the Bible has the word "Happy" in it just over 20 times. The word "Joy" appears over 200 times. That's ten times as many. And that's not counting verbs like "rejoice".

So, this day of the Advent season, let's talk about joy. In the Advent season, there are two main times we hear about joy.

## **I. The Magi**

The first is the story of the Magi, also known as "The Wise Men".

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. (Matthew 2:1-2)

Before the Advent season started, we were working our way through the book of Matthew. These men appear in chapter 2. When we hit that passage, I discussed these men in detail. If you'd like to learn more about them, you can go to our web site and look up the message, "Look to the Skies". For now, we'll hit some highlights about these men.

### ***1) They believed that the supernatural was important.***

First, they believed that the supernatural was important. The word "Magi" probably refers to religious leaders of a religion called "Zoroastrianism". People who follow this religion believe a lot of things, but for now two things stand out. First, they believe in one God. Second, they believe you can learn a lot about life by looking up at the stars. So, they practice astrology. Today, we would call Astrology misguided for lots of reasons, but it indicates that the Magi believed that understanding supernatural forces was important. They were imperfect men.

On the one hand, they believed in some things that were correct: Things like a belief in one God. On the other hand, they also believed in things that were superstition like astrology.

### **2) They came a long way.**

Second, for some reason, they travelled a long way. At the time, this religion was centered in Persia, several hundred miles to the east of Jerusalem. That's why we're told that the Magi came from the east. In those days, traveling long distances was difficult, if not dangerous. There were no highways or lighted streets. There was no one to help you if you had a problem. Whatever the Magi came for, it must have been important to them.

### **3) They were wealthy, important people.**

We also know that these were important people. They were not kings as many believe, but still, they were important. They could visit a nation and request to see the king. You and I couldn't do that.

Imagine calling the Governor's office and saying: "Hey, I'm going to be in town today." "Tell the governor I'm coming." "I want to ask him about something - in person." Good luck! For you and I seeing a king on a moment's notice is impossible. For these men, it was business as usual.

We also know that they were wealthy. Later we're told that they brought expensive gifts. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold we understand, but frankincense and myrrh were also costly.

### **4) Something made them so excited that they did something peculiar.**

These men must have been very excited about something. They were so excited, they acted in peculiar ways. They saw something that made them think they were going to meet the one who was born king of the Jews.

Now, if I were one of the attendants in the palace, I might have pulled the Magi aside. I might have said, "Perhaps you didn't notice, but we're in a **palace**. The man you're talking to is sitting on a **throne**. He has a **crown** on his head. Most people think **he's** the king of the Jews. Perhaps you wish to rephrase your question?"

So, the Magi say, "Oh, I see. Let's put that differently. We're not just looking for the king. We're looking for the one who was **born** king of the Jews. Is that better? Are we all together now?"

Visiting a king and insulting him would normally be a great way to be thrown into prison. Somehow, these men got away with doing something very peculiar. Perhaps because they were so important?

But, these men had done a lot of peculiar things up to this point. They were important people. Important people are usually busy people. Yet they dropped everything, left home, and went on a long, difficult journey. They took expensive gifts. After they arrived at the nation they were aiming at, they went into the presence of a powerful king and asked for his help. And they a bit clumsy when they did that. They forgot diplomatic protocols.

What would make them do all this?

Let's read their question again: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him. (Matthew 2:2)" Somehow, these men got it into their heads that a new king had been born - A king of the Jews. He was very important. This king of the Jews was someone that they should be worshipping. They determined all of this because they saw signs in the heavens, including a star. Something about this particular star was very special.

We said a moment ago that these men practiced astrology. Today, this is superstition. The Bible actually warns people not to do it. Sometimes though, God shows kindness to people even when they don't deserve it. He shows kindness to people even though they're going about things the wrong way. That's part of what we call "grace". God's grace was working in the lives of the Magi.

In other areas of the world at that time, the leading thinkers were the Greeks and the Romans. They were very enamored with philosophy and science. The Magi were likely aware of those things, but somehow, something was missing. Philosophy and science involve looking at the world around you. To the Magi, looking at the world around them wasn't enough. There had to be something more, but they didn't know exactly what. So, they looked to the skies. They looked to the heavens. When they did, they saw something never seen before, and never seen since. A star. It was special, and the Magi knew how special it was. To them, that star in the sky indicated something immense appearing on the earth. That star, they believed, would lead them to the answer. That star would take them to the thing that was missing from their lives. It was worth dropping everything and saddling up the camels. It was worth every minute of a long, difficult journey. It was worth the most expensive gifts they could take along.

Apparently, after initially pointing them in the right direction, the star went away for a while. After arriving in Israel, the Magi weren't sure where exactly to go. They were pointed in the right direction, Bethlehem, by the leadership in Jerusalem, but they still didn't know for certain the exact location. Then, the star came back.

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (Matthew 2:9-10)

These men experienced joy. The classic King James says, "They rejoiced with exceeding great joy." This story was originally written in ancient Greek. In the original language, some words are

used that are unusual. It's as though these men were experiencing something so powerful, they couldn't find sufficient words to describe it.

The Magi were men who were looking for something - Something missing from their lives. The world didn't have it, so they looked to the skies. The way they looked wasn't right, but God was gracious. Sometimes he rewards people whose hearts are in the right place, even if their minds aren't. The writer of the book of Hebrews talks about that.

“...anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)”

Is something missing from your life? Maybe you've looked all over, and you've never found it. The Bible tells us that God rewards those who earnestly seek him. For those people, God provides help. Ask God to lead you. Here's what Jesus said about that:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

Ask God to lead you. He will. To those who find God, like the Magi, there is joy.

If you're looking for God, you've come to the right place. Let us tell you how you can find what's been missing from your life. You see some helpful info at the end of this article.

Let's look at some others in the Christmas story who found joy. Let's look at the Shepherds.

## **II. The Shepherds**

We read about the Shepherds in our last session when we talked about “peace”. Let's read it again.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. (Luke 2:8)

So we have the shepherds. Let's compare them to the Magi. Whereas the Magi were rich, the shepherds were at best common people - If not poor. Rich people don't need to be up all night with dirty, unrewarding jobs like tending sheep.

The magi were highly educated. The Shepherds may have had basic religious education, but not more.

The magi were important: They could call on kings. The Shepherds had a tough job in the middle of nowhere.

In many ways, the Magi had much more than the Shepherds - At least in terms of what the world considers to be valuable. However, the Shepherds though had something over the Magi. The Magi weren't exactly sure what they were looking for or where to look. The Shepherds knew exactly what they were looking for.

Let's read more:

10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11)

Listen to that again: "I bring you **good news** that will cause **great joy** for **all** the people."

So, we have good news. What is it? "A Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord".

Let's break this apart. We're going to have "great joy". It's going to be for "all" the people. Why? Because there's good news. What is the good news? A Savior has been born. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

### **1) Great Joy.**

First: Great Joy. Not just happiness. Not just joy. There will be great joy.

### **2) For all the people**

It will be for all the people. That's why we spent time a moment ago to compare the shepherds with the Magi. It's possible to be like the Magi and find God. It's possible to be successful and wealthy and powerful. But as I read the Scriptures, these people tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Jesus once said, "...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. (Matthew 19:24)" As Jesus often did, he used hyperbole when he said that. He made an exaggerated statement for dramatic effect. Rich people can get into heaven, but for some reason, it's harder than it is for the average person. There's something about success that tends to make people think they've arrived at the final solution. They don't need anything else. There's something about having things go wrong in your life that makes you more open to God. The joy will be available for all people, rich and poor, powerful and powerless.

### **3) Good News**

That's one of the reasons that all of this is good news.

Good news - We all like good news. But you know something? In order to have good news you have to have some bad news every now and then. If all you ever heard was good news, no one would care.

Sadly, we hear plenty of bad news today. Every morning, I try to read the newspaper. Sometimes after looking at the front page, I get discouraged. I feel like this man: Instead of reading more, we can be tempted to cover the windows, walls, and doors with the paper. And then we can cover ourselves.

Now, in the days when Jesus was born, there was plenty of bad news. The Jewish nation had been invaded by the Romans. The Jewish people were oppressed. Life was hard.

But the good news was more than just relief from the problems of the day. The good news was much greater.



#### **4) A Savior**

A Savior had just been born. The joy will be for everyone, because everyone has a problem - Sin. We all need to be saved from our sins. The apostle Paul wrote, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)" We have all sinned, so we all need a savior. Jesus is that savior.

But there's more.

#### **5) The Messiah, the Lord**

The Savior would also be the Messiah, the Lord. As we said, the Magi were looking for something, but they didn't know exactly what to look for or where to look. The Shepherds knew exactly. Although not every child in Israel had a complete education, many had access to religious training at the synagogue. Centuries before, a young boy named David lived as a shepherd. Somehow, he was able to be strong in the Scriptures. Because of that, he became the model of a Hebrew king.

Any faithful Jew trained in the Scriptures looked for and waited for the Messiah. And they knew the Messiah would come to Israel. These Shepherds, too, were watching.

Who is the Messiah? He is the one who would fulfill all the prophecies of the Scriptures. He is the great king.

The joy is available to all people. However, not all people realize all the joy. What do you need to do to receive the joy that God offers during the Advent season?

### **III. Steps to having joy**

#### **1) Remember the Magi**

First, you need to remember the Magi. They realized something was missing from their lives. Other educated people of the day looked to philosophy and science. Philosophy and science are fine and good. But they're not everything.

Then one day, the Magi were given a direction. They saw a very special star. It told them where to go. The Magi realized that following the star was worth everything. When they followed the star, they found joy.

Today, we learn about God in the Scriptures. The Bible tells us where to go. The more we understand the Scriptures, the more access we have to real joy.

#### **2) Remember the Shepherds**

Next understand the message given to the Shepherds. Realize that God has announced a message that brings joy. It's for everyone. Wherever you are in life, the message is for you. It's good news. But in order to understand the good news, you need to understand the bad news. The bad news is, you and I have a problem of sin. We need to be saved.

The Good news of Christmas is that God has sent a Savior to do just that. So, you need to do two things: First, ask God to forgive you of your sins through Jesus. Next, you need to recognize that the Messiah is the great King. The Messiah is Jesus. You need to make Jesus the King of your life.

If you do all these things, you can begin a life of joy. Let us tell you how. Again, more info appears at the end of this article.

### **IV. Closing Thoughts**

At this point, let me share just a few thoughts. There may be some readers who have made these decisions long ago. Yet somehow, joy evades them - Or at least it seems to feel that way. Why is that?

We live in a broken world. Sadly, sometimes the brokenness of our world hides truth from us. God has given us wonderful gifts, but we don't always see them. It prevents us from making this practical. The Apostle Paul wrote about this:

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.  
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (I  
Corinthians 13:12)

Someday, we will see our Lord face to face. Then, we will live in a perfect eternity. That is all secured for us the moment we believe. Here on earth, it's not always easy to connect with the truth of our eternal state. In those times, we need to ask for God's help. When we do, God's Holy spirit helps us.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

So, if you're not feeling joy at the moment, be patient and ask for help.

### What NOT to do



*The Cheshire Cat from Alice in Wonderland*

Now, here's what not to do. We started our discussion with the Burger King server singing "Have it your way". Recall, she looked very happy. Maybe she was happy. Then again, maybe not. Maybe she just pasted a big, fake, plastic grin on her face and tried to look happy. Does anybody think she really lives for the moment that she takes pickles off your burger?

Don't do that. Maybe you feel a little more like the other server I ran into once. Maybe sometimes in life, you don't want to be there. If you're not feeling joy at the moment, you don't need to fake it. Be patient and ask God to help. If you're not feeling joy, trying to look like the Cheshire Cat from Alice and Wonderland only makes things worse.

Let's pull this all together.

### Conclusion

The world wants happy people. We've learned today that God offers something better. Joy. So, let's change our want ad:

Wanted: people who know the joy of the Lord.

This advent season remember the Magi. They followed the star and found joy. Today God gives us his word, the Bible.

Remember the shepherds. They heard a message announcing joy for all people. They heard that a Savior had been born. Most of all, this Savior was the Messiah, the great king. Ask Jesus to save you from your sins. Invite Jesus to be the King of your life.

If you do these things, like the Magi, and like the Shepherds, you can find joy.

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For more information

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To find our church, visit our site:

[TrinityTeaneck.org](http://TrinityTeaneck.org)

Or, you can visit my site:

[PhilBrainerd.com](http://PhilBrainerd.com)

If you want to learn how to receive forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's excellent site:

[PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net)

May the Lord bless you as you seek him.