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SERMON TITLE: "A Very Happy Ending"
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-12
DATE: December 24, 2017, 10:30 a.m.
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read Matthew 2:1-12

The choir sang Part One of *The Messiah* last Sunday. It was magnificent. It was inspiring. It was incredible. Nyadia wrote on her Facebook:

"I cannot believe what just happened. Tonight a personal dream/goal of mine was accomplished. I just conducted Handel's Messiah with an orchestra. Thank you Brittany Haywood, Steve and Marna Bayless, and the fabulous singers at FPCDuncanville. Also, our soloists were incredible... outstanding. I can't believe we just did that. Wow!"

I would put this choir up against any choir. They did a great job.

The Messiah was hard.

The entire oratorio was a 259-page score, written in twenty-three days straight, in 1741. Handel says about that experience:

"I don't know if I was in the body or out of the body."

When King George II of England heard its first performance, he stood at the singing of the "Hallelujah Chorus" and audiences have been standing for it ever since.

What is it that caused a man to write an oratorio for twenty-three days straight? What is it that caused a king to stand at its singing?

It was truth.

When the truth hits you, it is deeply moving. Have you had that kind of experience?

The man who stood heard the truth and its indisputable response: *Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*

Handel wrote the music, but the words were written by another man who was equally moved by the truth and wanted others to hear it.

One day a post arrived for Handel from a man named Charles Jennens. He was a scholar, Shakespeare editor, and deeply devout. He had connected Scriptures from the Old Testament to show that Christ and Christianity was an eternal truth. When Handel read the opening words from Isaiah 40, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," he was instantly and deeply moved and began work on it.

The Scriptures that make up *The Messiah* begin with Isaiah and connect the prophets Haggai (2:6-7) to Malachi (3:1):

"Thus says the Lord of Hosts; 'In a little while ... I will shake all nations, *and the desire of all nations shall come.*' ... 'Then suddenly, the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,' says the LORD Almighty.

The desire of all the nations is to see and know God. And, God will answer this desire.

Many in our culture today recognize this. There is a longing inside; some even realize the longing is for God. For example, did you see the animated movie *The Star*? Even a little donkey, whose desire was to run away and join a caravan, instead, along with other animal friends, followed the light of the star to the newborn Savior.

The entire cosmos is drawn to God's light.

So the prophets say, "The Lord you are seeking will come to the earth."

But, we have a problem. The prophet Malachi says:

"But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire." (3:2)

It's like having your mother drop in unexpectedly and you know how her house is perfect—but your house is a mess? ☹

Every person longs for God but we are also terrified to face God. We know we have a problem. That problem is called sin. We know we deserve judgment.

In light of that, the prophet Malachi pleads with God for mercy, saying, "Now consider (God, that) *we are all your people.*"

Malachi is saying that all people everywhere belong to God.

Looking again at those Old Testament verses, note that even though we have a problem standing before God because of our sin that deserves God's judgment, still *all of us around the world wish that God would come down.* That is the longing inside.

- Handel expressed it by writing the Messiah.
- Jennens sought God by putting together all those verses to show God's truth.
- Even the animals in the Christmas movie at all costs followed the star to God's baby.

Isaiah 60 says: "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." (3)

Now they don't really have any way to know God—they are pagans. Yet, this appearance of God will draw the Gentiles and kings to His light because all people in all their variety belong to the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament this thread appears of the drawing of the kings of the nations to the real King of kings.

The three kings who came to worship Jesus were a reflection of that crowd.

They were wise men.

Now listen to this from Isaiah 60. Isaiah is writing to exiled Israelites:

All nations will come to your light; mighty kings will come to see your radiance. "Look and see, for everyone is coming home! Your sons are coming from distant lands; your little daughters will be carried home. Your eyes will shine, and your heart will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you. They will bring you the wealth of many lands. Vast caravans of camels will converge on you, the camels of Midian and Ephah. The people of Sheba will bring gold and frankincense and will come worshiping the LORD. "Foreigners will come to rebuild your towns and their kings will serve you. For though I have destroyed you in my anger, I will now have mercy on you through my grace. (v. 3-10)

Why will people come to Israel? Because God's Savior is born there in Bethlehem. He will come to His temple in God's city. All of these people from all over the world will

come, bringing wealth—all their skills, talents, and gifts—to God's people, and they will worship the Lord together.

Think about this. You know how sometimes life is kind of tough for Christians. People come against God and God's people, but the good news is that the hostility will end. There is a future glory for God's people. "*Your eyes will shine, and your heart will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you.*"

They come willingly, happily, bountifully celebrating our hope in God.

We have done a lot to share the gospel with this community and to help the poor. What if all of a sudden the people who heard our message came here? What if they came to worship the King? Wouldn't we be joyful?

God's promise in Scripture is that in the end people from everywhere will seek the Lord. They will come to God's people. They come bearing precious gifts.

The three kings were forbears of this:

And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Mt. 2:9-11)

It was a time of great joy and will be a time of great joy in the future because Jesus has come to forgive our sins, to have mercy on us, and somehow make us beautiful.

Hear this story and be encouraged. In the end, all the hurts and troubles will be made beautiful; a happy ending. Be thankful for your relatives who have gone on "to glory" because God's plan really is glory ahead of us. Jennens saw it and using his talents, he shared it with Handel, who added his gifts and shared it with the king—and with you. We will see people from everywhere bearing gifts and worshiping God. Just like the three kings; three wise men who came to Bethlehem to worship Jesus.

Are you a wise man? A wise woman? A wise child? If so, you will have a very happy ending. It is the truth!

AMEN