

The Visit

What if...? Series

By Chris Famisaran

All right, you guys remember where we are in the story. So for those of you who weren't here or the terminally short term memory folks, we met Joe and Maria, who are migrant farm workers, But Joe was pretty good at fixing stuff, working in the shop. They got engaged, but before the baby could come, the angel came and told them. I mean, before they got married, the angel came and told them that the baby was coming and things got pretty hectic with the pointing and the staring and the stories. And so they decided to pack it up and go to Los Angeles in the 72 Ford pickup truck that doesn't look like much but runs pretty good. You guys know my love for old trucks. Took me a while to find this picture, but, you know, they parked up in a neighborhood there where some other RVs were and that night, the baby decided he was going to come. No time to race to a hospital or a clinic just right there. And some ladies who live there in the RV's came over and helped and the baby was born. And then right after that, some angels appeared and started singing to the homeless folks and they came racing down to see what was going on and then ran off to tell everybody that they could find about this baby that had been born. And just before Joe and Maria go to bed for the night, they looked down the way and they see some kids tag in the name Jesus under the overpass, and they wonder what kind of special baby is this going to be?

Well, as you can imagine, the next day, they were pretty tired. They didn't do too much, but they needed to run to the store and buy a few supplies. Nobody had given them a baby shower and they needed some diapers and a few things got back to their place of their parking, their truck, and just kind of rested for the day. Take it easy.

The next day, Joe started looking for a job and it didn't take too long before he found one working at one of the industries there fixing their machines. And it took you know, they had to wait till the first paycheck so they could prove that he had a job. And then they were able to secure a modest little one bedroom apartment. Nothing really, you know, spectacular to write home about. But

compared to the back of a 72 Ford pickup truck, it was a mansion. Indoor plumbing is an amazing thing. And life went on. They worked. They decided that Maria would stay home and raise this special baby. They weren't going to trust this baby to just any old daycare center down the street. So her job was to raise the child while Joe went out and worked.

After about a year, Joe was able to secure a job at Lockheed Martin, got a security clearance, and was working on their machines, keeping them up and running. And while he was there, he met some you know, you meet the people there at work and he met one guy that he helped out. And Joe made such an impression on him when he found out they were living this little, little apartment, he said, you know, I've got a back house. It ain't much little two bedroom, one bath, back house place where you can stay. Gave him a good rate on it. And they were able to move into this little house and, you know, life goes on.

Baby Jesus kind of starts to learn to walk, takes his first steps. And Joe liked to work on his car. You know, he'd be out on the street or on the driveway working on his truck some days. And then you know what happens? The neighbors start bringing their cars and the neighbors friends start bringing their cars. And you could often find Joe out laying on the street or in the driveway working on somebody's car.

And the kids in the neighborhood love to come and hang out with Joe while he was working on the car because he was kind to him, talk to him, let him help a little bit, hand him wrenches. Maybe if he was working on the brakes, they could pump the brakes a little bit while he bled the brakes, these kinds of things. And it always seemed like Maria showed up with some lemonade or some snack or something, and it was just a place to hang out. A couple of the teenage girls on the street started babysitting Baby Jesus once in a while, when Joe and Maria managed to get a date night in every once in a while and life goes on.

And one day some of the kids came running to the door. They knocked on the door and Joe opens it and he said, "The. FBI is looking for you. You better hide." And they run off. And Joe's like, What kind of game are they playing now? The FBI is not looking for me. I have a security clearance. The FBI knows where I am. They don't need to look. They can just come here. Didn't think too much more about. I thought the kids were just playing some secret spy game. But about 5

minutes later, the black SUV showed up and out tumbled a bunch of folks in suits, kind of important looking. They came up to the door and knocked on the door and Joe opens the door and one of them says, this is going to be really weird, but do you have a baby that's maybe a year and a half, two years old?

And about that very moment, Baby Jesus pokes his head around the corner to see who Daddy's talking to at the door. And boy, did they light up when they saw him. Can we come in and see the baby? And Joe didn't even really know why, but he opened the door and let him in. I think Maria was a little scared. She scooped up the baby, What are you doing? And they came in and very similar to the homeless folks. A year and a half ago, these guys came over to the baby and began to talk to the baby, lay hands on the baby, pray over the baby. Some of them even bow down to the baby. And Maria and Joe are just kind of standing there like, what is going on?

And afterwards, everybody gets a seat in the house, took all the chairs they had to seat everybody, and they began to tell them their story. They were antiquity scholars from the University of Quebec way over on the eastern side of Canada, and they have a little antiquities museum there. And these guys had noticed this new star in the sky and then noticed that nobody else noticed. Why was the world not talking about this new star and what was going on? It was just plain as day. It was right there. And one of them remembered something in one of the old prophecies in the in the archives. And that part of the archives hadn't been digitized yet. So they had to go down there and get out the old scrolls and the old documents and start going through them by hand. No Google search. And eventually they found the prophecies again about how the star would signify the birth of a very special baby, this king, this messiah. And so they decided to go and see the baby until they planned their trip. And it's a long trip. And they said we had to travel at night. We couldn't just fly. We didn't know where we were going. We had to wait, see where we were going. Follow the star. Sometimes it was cloudy or stormy and we couldn't even travel. We had to wait till it got clear night again.

So when we got to California, we stopped in Sacramento to talk to the governor, to ask him about the baby. Governor wouldn't even talk to us. So this but one of his assistants told us to send them an email, let them know when we found the baby. We got down to Los Angeles. We tried to talk to the mayor. I think he thought we were nuts. He didn't even want to talk to us either. And so we've

been looking. We spent the last couple of weeks just looking for this baby. We are so happy to be here.

And we almost forgot we brought presents. They scurry back out to the black SUVs and bring back some gifts from their museum, some gold pieces, antique gold pieces that are worth far more than just the gold, some antique silver coins. And one of the guys looked at Joe and said, Joe, is that your Ford pickup truck? It was, yeah. It don't look like much runs pretty good. They kind of huddled up for a minute and they came back. So we're going to give you one of our SUVs. Just Baby Jesus needs to be in a car that's going to keep him safe. Anti-lock brakes, airbags, air conditioning. Right. So the worst. If the worst happened. The unthinkable. He needs to be protected and safe. So they signed over one of the black SUV says to him. And just like that, they were gone.

And again, Marie and Joe were left standing there wondering what happened. The angel had said that this was going to be a special baby, but up to now, everything had seems kind of normal. He was a baby. He did baby things learned to walk, was learning to talk, had the baby proof the house because he got mobile, all those things that just were normal. And then all of a sudden something happens that reminds you there's nothing normal about this baby. And I hope you will join us next week as we finish up our story.

Thank you. Trying to be like the WWE Handoff. How many of you are enjoying Bill's gift of storytelling? I mean, I really feel like I don't have to preach. I mean, I can just pray and I think you all get the good point. And then but, you know, I'm contractually obligated to talk, so I'm kidding. Let's pray. God, thank you, Lord, for the great summary that Bill has shown in in a modern retelling. And now, as we dive into the scriptures, be with us in Jesus name, Amen.

Metro UK reported on a story that happened earlier this year of a tourist named Ivan who was swimming in the ocean of Mitty beach. Mitty beach in Greece when he was carried away by a series of powerful currents. And if you've ever been caught in a rip tide before and maybe carried out into the ocean, well, he was caught in Riptide and next thing he knew, he kept floating further and further away and tried to swim back.

But he couldn't get back to the beach. And his friends saw what was happening. They alerted the lifeguards who alerted the Coast Guard, but then they could not

find him. And he and along with the friend, were eventually declared to be lost at sea. However, 18 hours later, rescuers pulled Ivan out of the ocean, cold, shaken but alive

If as because shortly before his ocean ordeal began, he found an unexpected flotation device, a children's toy ball, just like Tom Hanks in the great movie Castaway Wilson! Ivan found himself clinging to this ball for survival. Except it wasn't a volleyball. It was a child size soccer ball, a number three size soccer ball. Now, Ivan's recovery, of course, was covered throughout all of Greece.

The national media and several newspapers carried this photo of of Ivan being pictured with his father, who was also the mayor of Kassandra. And that little ball people read the newspapers, saw the stories. And one particular mother looked at a phone at that photo and saw and recognized that was her child's little ball. You see, ten days earlier, the little ball had drifted and got into the ocean over 80 miles away from where Ivan would grab it.

And what was interesting as well, when Ivan found the ball, it was only inflated halfway. And of course, all of the people of North Macedonia were rightfully calling it a miracle. Now, today's lesson, biggest lesson we're going to take away is that God's providence can come from unexpected sources. God's providence can come from unexpected sources. Let's go to the book of Matthew.

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Chapter two. Matthew, Chapter two. And it's here We're going to revisit from the Bible the story of the Magi, who visit the Messiah, Matthew two versus one through 12. We all there? Okay. Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judea, during the time of who? King Herod Magi from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, Where is the ... Where is the one who's been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it arose. And when he came to worship him. When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed in all of Jerusalem with him. Can you imagine? King Herod says there's another king who was born in his district. How do you think he would feel? Perplexed, wondering who what? So what does he want to do? He wants to find the source of this potential threat. So he sends them off. And he's said, by the way, you know, when you find them, let me know when you when you find them. So I to also. King go and find and worship him. But does he really want to worship them? No. He wants to eliminate any potential threat to his rule, his authority.

So when he called together all the Chiefs people sorry, verse four, he the chief priest and teachers of law, he asked them where the Messiah was born. In Bethlehem. In Judea, they replied, But this is what the Prophet has written. But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. Four out of you will come a what?

A ruler. Who will what? Shepherd my people. Then Herod called the Magi secretly found. Is that time the star had appeared? He sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me so that I made you may go and worship him. After they heard the king, they went on their way in the star they had seen when it rose went above ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. And on coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother and they bowed down and worshiped him. And then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, of frankincense and myrrh.

Now, some of you may be asking, We know what gold is, right? And it's worth a little bit. Or a lot. A lot. The frankincense and myrrh. I mean, some of you may be asking, what in the world is that? Well, frankincense originally it comes from Northern Africa and Arabia, and it's a dried rosin. And it's used. It's been used for many years for perfumes and incense. And in the past, it was considered a very, very valuable commodity. And when it burned as incense, it produced this wonderful, sweet, nice smelling smell, aroma, as they would say. And it's also apparently known to disinfect and repel insects and other pests, myrrh, as well as also a dried rosin. It's from also Arabia, from Northern Africa, and it's from these thorny shrubs and trees. But it also, too, was used in perfumes, incense and even medicine for many, many years.

It's also coming from a word that means bitter, and it could also be used as an antiseptic and analgesic. And also some other qualities that are medicinal. But frankincense, if you look back through scripture, for instance, in Exodus, it was an ingredient that was a perfume that was used in the sanctuary. It was an accompaniment to when they offered sacrifices as well as part of all the burns and the peace offering.

And it also was part of the shew bread, show bread, a part of the tabernacle. Myrrh was also used in in the worship as an ingredient for anointing. When they anointed the priest tabernacle, the Kings, and was even used to the purification

of Queen Esther. And you can also note that it was used for embalming in John 19.

Now, when these wise men, when the Magi came, they it could have taken them most likely some time for them to get there, perhaps. I mean, it could have been a couple of weeks, but more than likely could have been up to a year and a half or two years as Bill has already mentioned, because they came from afar. They were astronomers and priests from essentially Persia and we don't know how many wise men were there. We only know that there were three gifts given. There could have been two wise men or there could have been 500. We don't know. What we know is these wise men came and the gifts that they gave Jesus, Mary and Joseph, they were kings, really fit for a king. And is that not who Jesus is? Amen.

But there's also some lessons that we can take from these wonderful gifts, these unexpected gifts. And by the way, I also want to mention that when God gave these unexpected gifts to Mary, Joseph and Jesus, it far exceeded anything that they could have ever imagined. And they were also useful. I mean, gold. What can you do with gold? You can trade it. It would help to sustain them for the future. Because if you remember correctly, what was Joseph's trade? He was a carpenter. Did carpenters make a lot of money back then. No, in fact, if anything, he was a blue collar worker. He was a hard worker. Nothing to take away. Nothing to look back bad. It's nothing to look down. But Joseph was in a trade that did not necessarily bring a lot of money in. I'm sure he was a faithful man. And God bless them. But it's also nice to be able to have a little nest, to be able to help move them forward, especially as well. I don't want to give it away, but for those of you who know, they're going to have to go on a journey right. But these gifts are useful. And not only that, they're not something they're not cheap. They're considered special. They're precious. They're valuable. They're rare. And they only gave Jesus the best. And when they came and worshiped Jesus, they were kind. They were compassionate, they were respectful, and they worshiped this young child.

So what are some of the things that we can take away? Obviously, God gives us gifts. Amen. The gifts and talents. And we should use these gifts for the Lord. And we should not take these gifts as willy nilly. But they're precious. God has it, really. We're stewards of these gifts. And should we not use them? But also take

time and to just thank God for everything that is in your life that you have right now. You may not have a lot or you may have a lot. Maybe that should be a prayer of Lord, I have an overabundance. Please help me. Lord did not take this stuff for granted. But may we also take the lesson from these wise men to be respectful and to worship. And thank God for all that we have in the good times, and especially in the challenging times.

So God blesses Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and unbeknownst to them, God was also protecting them unknowingly because in verse 12, verse 12, it says to the speaking about the wise men and having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Why would they be warned? Well, somebody knows about Jesus and there are no good intentions in part on this, this individual, because as we're going to learn, this person goes and takes extreme measures to make sure that this potential threat is eliminated.

But we'll talk about that next week. So the question that maybe we have to ask is, well, actually, let's be reminded God protects Mary, Joseph and Jesus by steering the Magi back another way that's not being able to let King Herod know where Jesus is. You have to ask yourself sometimes, how many times has my guardian angels steered me away from trouble?

And then, have you ever been driving on the freeway and you see an accident and maybe you avoid it? Or as you're driving, you see an accident behind you? And if you've been driving 30 seconds earlier, you could have potentially been in that accident or there's other times maybe in your life where you were headed one direction, you were going to make a decision, and then perhaps the Holy Spirit prompted you and thought, you know what, maybe this is not the right time and you make that decision and maybe you receive a phone call later that day realizing, oh, the Lord saved me from a lot of trouble.

Now we don't always know when they're going to be challenging times and we don't always know when God is going to bless us. But the main thing is may we live every day thankful and grateful for all that God is doing and that God will lead and guide us and we'll provide. Now, God may not necessarily bless you with the Ritz-Carlton experience, because that's sometimes what we want. Right. That's what we hope and pray by faith. But yet God has something even better. And that is ultimately a trusting, loving relationship with God. And we don't always know exactly where the road is going to go, but God will provide the

resources as he provided Mary, Joseph and Jesus and the means to get where they need to go.

And God will lead and guide you wherever you go.

So as you think back in your life, has God faithfully met your needs during a challenging time? Is God ma... Has God faithfully met your needs during a challenging time, or are you in a challenging time? And if so, pray that God will supply your needs and give you direction when you face adversity.

You know, this past year has been another whopper. How many of you expected inflation this last year? How many of you expected the price of gas to jump up to more than \$6? Anybody pay \$7 More than \$7? Where do you live? I know where you are. I know where you live. And I'm not surprised by that. \$7. I tried not to pay \$6. I tried so hard. But it happened. When gas is everywhere above \$6. I had to drive and do stuff. And not just gas, but the price of food has gone up. Last night I was talking to my father-in-law and he mentioned there's no eggs at Costco. Right. Things are in short, demand are short supply, not demand. Short supply.

Life is challenging, my friends. I think we're all feeling it. But our God is a faithful God and God will lead us.

Let us pray. Father in Heaven, Lord. You are the author and the creator of the universe. And us, Lord Grant its wisdom. Grant his courage. And Lord, grant us with the vision and ability to see forward, which you are calling us to. Lord, we've had the pinch this last year. Make decisions maybe to cut certain things back. Things that we love. And we've had to cancel our streaming service or we've had to cut down on certain things that we love to eat. We've had to cut down trips, this or that, or there's other areas of our life where that's being impacted and we've had to let certain things go. But ultimately, Lord, we know that you are a faithful God and you will see us through and you will bless us for our needs. Maybe sometimes not necessarily what our wants, but we also know that you are a God and that want to give us what we desire. But maybe we're not ready yet to receive those things yet to prepare us. May the Holy Spirit work in us and above all, may this next week as we head towards Christmas. Lord, reflect on the good things of what we're grateful for and ultimately what you have done that God, you have come into this world to live among us. You lived among us, You worshiped and you. You cared for everyone and ultimately died for us. And we

give you thanks and praise for what you've done, for it to be with this. Now, as we move forward in Jesus name. Everybody said Amen. All right.