

The Wise Still Seek Him

Sunday, February 5, 2024 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Matthew 2:1-12; Micah 5:2

- Introduction

Monday, February 6 is the holiday of Epiphany in which the wise men from the east came looking for Jesus, and this caused quite a stir in Jerusalem. The angelic invitation to the shepherds out in the hills of Bethlehem have come and gone though Joseph, Mary and Jesus are still in Bethlehem. Very little is known about them. The Bible does not mention their number, the notion that there were three may come from the number of gifts presented to the family. They may have been astrologers from what is now called Iran but whoever they were, they followed a star that led them to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem.

- Set the Stage

The wise men arrive in Jerusalem and start asking scary questions: "where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him. Herod, the sitting king, was troubled as was all the rest of Jerusalem. Politics in the ancient Middle East was cutthroat, sometimes literally, and Herod was known to have even members of his family murdered if he thought there was even a slight chance that they would turn on him. His own mother was taken prisoner and she wrote a touching letter to him pleading her undying love and loyalty. She had done nothing against him and he had no evidence, just suspicion. He had her executed. By the way, the New Testament notes that there was more than one "Herod" in power in Israel during the life and ministry of Jesus, but they were all the same.

Herod calls a meeting of all the chief priests and scribes, experts in the Scriptures and asked them what they knew. Someone pointed out Micah 5:2, which says that the Messiah will be the arrival point for the Messiah, even though it is a small village, and still it to this day. Herod has a meeting with the wise men and asks them to search carefully in Bethlehem and when they have found this child, send word to him that he might worship the child as well. The wise men resumed their search and find the holy family. They worship Jesus, notable that even in this early stage of the narrative people from other nations recognize the Jesus is God having entered humanity. After this, one or more of them have a dream in which God warns them not to return to Herod, but leave for their homeland by a different route. We never hear from them again.

- Main Point

The main point is that the wise still seek Him. The wise men did so literally and we do not know how far they had to travel. The book of Hebrews has a chapter that is all about what faith is. Hebrews 11:1 "talks about faith be the substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen. Most people focus on that mysterious verse but I think the most practical definition of faith is in verse six, where we are told that faith is believing that there is a God and that He rewards people who seek Him.

- Application

The application is to ask yourself how have you been seeking God? We have the disciplines of prayer and study/meditation upon the Scriptures and both are ask essential to our souls as food and air for our bodies. But I'm mindful of the commands of Jesus when people asked Him what

was the essence of the Law. He pointed to Deuteronomy 6:4, that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and that the second is like it (Leviticus 19:18) that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Part of seeking God involves seeking our neighbors, visiting them in their troubles, standing up for them if they are not treated fairly and seeking to help them as much as possible. There is an element to seeking God that is that as well.

Finally, be willing to persevere. The Bible says that he who perseveres in doing good will be rewarded in due time. I read recently of someone who persevered as something for which I have no patience, jigsaw puzzles. There is this fellow I read about named Jack Harris, who decided that he was going to finish his humongous jigsaw puzzle no matter what. This is part of what is written about him:

"Harris, who was 86-year-old, was determined to finish his five-foot long, 5,000-piece jigsaw. And when he thought the painstaking process was complete, he stood back to admire his work, only to find one piece was missing. Mr. Harris has searched his home for the missing piece but his family fears one of their two dogs has swallowed it."

- Conclusion

As the title says, the wise still seek Christ. They seek Him with the determination of a man who finished a 5,000 piece puzzle (save one piece). They seek Him in the Scriptures, they seek Him in prayer. They also seek Christ by being like him in the lives of those who suffer. That all is involved in seeking Christ.

<https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2024/august/mans-7-year-jigsaw-puzzle-missing-one-piece.html>