

Sermon Academy November 16, 2020

Epiphany Sunday Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany is the story of the wise men or as Eugene Peterson says in the Message, scholars from the east. One of the realities of this part of the story of Jesus birth is that people have always been looking for Jesus, the Messiah. The people of Israel have always been looking.

When Herod heard that the scholars were in Jerusalem and were asking questions about the newborn King of the Jews, Herod is terrified and most of Jerusalem as well. Herod gathers the high priests and religious scholars and asked them, "Where is the Messiah to be born?" They respond, "The prophet Micah wrote it plainly, Bethlehem in the land of Judah; from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

It's interesting that Herod arranges a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. He pretends to be devout in his belief of the coming Messiah and tells them "when you find Jesus let me know and I will join you at once in your worship".

The Wise Men instructed by Herod set off for Bethlehem, and the star appeared again and it led them to the place where the child was.

They could hardly contain themselves: they were in the right place, at

the right time. They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome with joy, they kneeled and worshipped him, and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In a dream, they are warned not to report back to Herod. So they left the territory without being seen and returned to their own country. After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt."

It intrigues me that the story of the Wise men is not found in Luke's nativity narrative. In fact Luke's account says that eight days after Jesus' birth he is taken to the temple to be dedicated and then they returned to Nazareth. The next scene that Luke describes is when Jesus is 12 years old.

It's important to remember that in order to know Jesus we have to be looking for him. The Wise Men saw this star and believed it was a sign from God and they packed up and went out to find the Messiah. People are always looking for something to bring meaning to their lives, and the reality is that Jesus is the one who brings meaning into our world. But Jesus is not without threat in our world as he was in the world into which he was born. The threat that Jesus brought to

Herod was that his cruel and ruthless rule was not the way that life should be. Across the world we see people being subjected to cruelty and abuse. We can't help but to remember our family in South Sudan who has been forced to live in a refugee camp in Uganda. Why, because of cruel and ruthless leaders who are only interested in staying in power, and care nothing for the needs, hopes, and dreams of their people.

It is important to remember that because of the treasure that was brought by the Wise Men, Joseph had the resources to take his wife and child to Egypt so that Jesus was not one of the babies killed by Herod.

Our willingness to share our resources and ourselves so that the ministry of Jesus can be fulfilled in the world was the calling of the Wise men and it is our calling today. God is calling us to be wise people as we seek to navigate this journey of life. Most of the struggles that we experience in life come during those times when we fail to have a wise heart. Most of the failures that I have experienced in my own life and witnessed in the life of others have been because of a lack of wisdom.

As Mr. Rogers reminds us in times of trouble and we are certainly living in times of trouble just as it was in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, “look for the helpers.” The Wise men were helpers and that’s who we’re called to be today, to be helpers, just like these Wise men who were some of the heroes at the time of Jesus’ birth.