

Wise Men. What about Wise women? Recently, I saw something that suggested that if the wise men had been women, things would have been different and better. First, if the wise men had been women, they would not have arrived many months after Jesus' birth because they would have stopped to ask for directions. And had the wise men had been women, they would have been there to clean up the mess so Jesus wouldn't have had to be born in a barn. And finally, had the wise men been women, they would have brought much more practical gifts including a casserole so the family would have something to eat. Well anyway, the wise men were men, so we have to deal with that.

Seriously though, the Magi (as Scripture calls them) weren't bumbling idiots. They really were wise men. They were advisors to the king. Scientists, astrologers, astronomers. Who were the Magi? Meet Balthazar of Baghdad. No, we don't really know whether that was one of the wisemen's names, though that's what tradition suggests. And we're not really sure whether these men came from present day Iraq, but it's possible. About 600 years before Christ's birth, the Jews were exiled to this part of the world. During their 70 years there at least one Israelite rose to a position of power and influence. That individual was Daniel, the same Daniel who once spent a night in the lions' den. For 60 years Daniel held important Babylonian and Persian government posts, including Chairman of the Magi (Daniel 2:48). I can't imagine Daniel studying the stars with his magi underlings without telling them about the true God who made the heavens and the earth. Daniel must have done more than that. He must have told the magi about the promise God made to send a savior through the Israelites. That a special star would lead to the place of his birth. That information was recorded into the Persian History books. Why else then would magi, 600 years later, care about the birth of a baby 615 miles away in Israel? Daniel's bold witness is a reminder not to underestimate the impact of sharing our faith with our co-workers and friends.

These Magi may not have been very orthodox in their faith, but still, they were looking for a coming Messiah. They took literally the statement from Numbers 24.17: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel." And so they searched the skies for hundreds of years looking for a sign that the Messiah had come. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced and came seeking the one who was born king of the Jews.

We don't know exactly how far they traveled, but it is likely that they came from 500 to 1000 miles away. These Magi were the first to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy that was read to you this morning. "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" The season of the church year that begins today is Epiphany. It refers to Christ appearing to the Gentiles. And that is what happened when these wise men came to see the child Jesus. Christ is a Savior for all nations, not just for the Jews. He is appearing to the Gentiles as well. So today, we are encouraged to, "Walk the Way of the Wise Men!"

What would prompt someone to leave the comfort of their homes to go on a dangerous journey? Romance? Yes. Wealth? Most definitely. But faith? Yes – faith. "Where is He who has been born the King of the Jews?" What a probing question – there is no doubt in their language that He had been born – the question is "Where is He?" They had seen the star – the evidence was real – now where is He? They had faith that He was alive – that He existed – now all they needed to do was to find Him. Their purpose was established – find Him. And so they were willing to risk everything to find Him. They were willing to leave the safety of their homes – to risk a perilous journey to seek a King.

Can you imagine their neighbor's reaction? "Are you going on a journey?" "Yes." "Where are you going?" "We don't know for sure." "How far is it?" "Well we don't know that

either.” How long are you going to be gone?” Well were not quite sure on that either.” “Boy for wise men you sure don’t much do you?” But you know they must have said the same things to Abraham when he left his home for the Promised Land. They must have said the same things to Noah who was building an ark – even though it had never rained in the history of the earth up till that point. They must have said the same kind of things to Peter, Andrew, John and James when they left the fishing nets to become fishers of men. What are you crazy? Are you insane? Are you out of your minds? No not crazy – not insane – not out of their minds – men of faith. God’s journeys always involves FAITH.

You and I have never seen the baby Jesus. We did not listen to his sermons, or watch him heal sick people as an adult. But we have faith that Jesus Christ lived, died on a cross and rose again. The name Jesus means, “Savior”. We believe Jesus came to save us from our sins, to restore our relationship with God. This belief has been placed in our heart by the Holy Spirit. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. We walk this journey by faith in the promises of God. People of faith have been willing to respond to the challenges of the unknown over and over again down through history. A wise man walks his life journey in faith.

Secondly, a wise man’s walk is one of WORSHIP. When the wise men came on their journey it was for the purpose of worship. They brought with them gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts have a lot of symbolism associated with them. Gold represents wealth, royalty. It is a gift fit for a king. (Jesus was the King of Kings) Incense reminds us of the incense that was used in the temple. Its smoke rising up to heaven symbolized the prayers of God’s people rising up to heaven. Thus we see a gift for his deity. Jesus was the Son of God. Myrrh is a fragrant perfume that was used to anoint the dead – to embalm and preserve them. (Jesus was The Sacrificial Lamb) But there is more to worship than gold, incense, or myrrh isn’t there. Worship always involves SACRIFICE. Was there a price to be paid for the wise men’s worship? You bet. They had given themselves to a journey. Travel in those days was not very comfortable – in fact it could be down right dangerous. The wise men had sacrificed their own comfort to find the king and worship Him. Listen to what David said about sacrifice: “I will not offer to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost [me] nothing.” 2 Samuel 24:24 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” To truly worship requires sacrifice.

The greatest gift – the greatest sacrifice – you can give to God is yourself. You say but I have given nothing to Him today. I say yes you have even today you have given Him something of yourself. You have given Him your time by being here. You prepared for a journey this morning by getting up and getting dressed and ready to seek a King. You got into your cars – used your gas and came to church. Some of you when the offering plate came around put money into the plate to help pay kingdom expenses. You look for ways to volunteer and serve in this church. You live your life in a way that honors Christ. In this way, your worship God of God is your sacrifice to Him. But here is a fact I want you all to remember today: What God wants most of all – above everything else is You. He wants your heart – He wants your attention – 24/7 – the question to ask is: What am I willing to give Him? Am I willing to give Him my best? Am I willing to go on a spiritual journey to worship Him? Am I willing to give up my comfort zone to follow Christ? The wise men were – are you? Walk the way of the Wise Men. Walk with the intent to worship the King.

Finally, A wise man walks a way of Change. Look at verse twelve with me: "Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own

country another way." Isn't it interesting that after they worshiped Jesus that they could not go back the same way that they had come? I find that to be a fact even today. Once you know Jesus Christ you will never be the same. The Bible says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." New attitudes, new values, new found happiness and peace. Jesus Christ changes you. Jacob wrestled with God and never walked the same the rest of his life. Isaiah stepped into the presence of God and proclaimed "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." He was never the same again. Job questions God over and over again concerning his suffering and when God shows up Job says. "I'm speechless, in awe—words fail me. I should never have opened my mouth! I've talked too much, way too much. I'm ready to shut up and listen." Job met God and became a changed man.

That is what happened to the wise men when they encountered Christ – they were changed. Are you looking for direction in your life? If so, don't wait for some miraculous sign from God – a message written in the stars. Oh it's true; the stars do proclaim that there is a God and that he is powerful and wise (Psalm 19:1-4), but beyond that they can't tell us much about him. The stars can't tell us that we are sinners and need a savior. They don't explain how Jesus died and rose again to pay for our sins and through faith in him the way to heaven is open – only the Bible can do that. Looking for direction in life without reading the Bible is like trying to locate a friend's house without knowing the address. You'll end up going round and round in circles as the Magi did in Jerusalem until Scripture pointed the way.

The lesson is obvious isn't it? Follow in the wisemen's footsteps by eagerly listening to what God says to you in his Word. No, God doesn't tell us everything we would like to know but he does tell us everything that we need to know, that through faith in Jesus the door to heaven is open. It's that message on the plain white pages of Scripture and not some sort of spectacular sign in the sky that makes us sure of God's love and confident of the way to heaven.

The Wise men believed Christ was the Messiah, their Savior. And you know, we read of no greater faith than this in all the Bible. It is a faith that deserves to be placed side by side with that of the penitent thief. The thief saw one dying the death of a malefactor and yet prayed to him and called him 'Lord.' The wise men saw a newborn babe on the lap of a poor woman, and yet they worshipped him and confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of God." The magi really were wise men. And today, wise men still seek him. Wise men still serve him and wise men still worship him. My prayer for us is that we will be a church of wise men and women, seeking him, serving him and worshipping him as he leads us on a journey to a heavenly mansion. Likewise, don't underestimate yourself! You are highly intelligent. You know and understand what really matters. So then, Walk like a Wise Man.