

The Story of the Wise Men
Matt 2:1-12

Friends, what do you connect most with in the Christmas story? The traveling, the search for a place to stay in Bethlehem, working the night shift, looking after animals, having a supernatural experience of seeing an angel?

What part of the Christmas story connects with you?

Friends it's a good question to reflect on friends because it's easy for us to blow through the Christmas story as just one more item in our holiday celebrations.

- Set-up the tree, put out the lights,
- buy the gifts, wrap the gifts, hide the gifts,
- play the Christmas music, go to Christmas parties,
- send off Christmas cards,
- buy the food for Christmas dinner,
- go to the Christmas Eve service – sing carols,
- light candles, watch the Christmas pageant....
- then get together with family for Christmas eve....
- And finally open the presents!

But let's pause for a moment and remember that it is the Christmas story that is central to our holiday celebrations, everything else is – or should be peripheral.

Because friends, this whole season is all about God's amazing love. God's Love is the why behind all the celebrations, right? As the bible tells us "For God so loved the world, He sent his one and only son..." (John 3:16)

And the Christmas story tells us all about how God sent his one and only son... for us.

So, which part of the Christmas story connects with you the most?

Well friends, whatever your answer might be - I'd like for you to consider that in actuality it is the Wise Men whom we connect with the most.

The Wise Men were from the wealthy, highly-educated ruling class of the nations around Israel.

Friends – I’m fairly certain that most of us here tonight also trace our heritage back to some nationality that does not have the distinction of being “God’s Chosen People”

And I’m also confident that if we asked around the room tonight we’d discover that we are a group of highly educated people, and our jobs would probably reflect that.

And you will probably find that in our jobs, and in the companies we work for we are assistants, managers, supervisors, partners, VP’s, CEO’s or business owners and we are responsible for and oversee many people.

Additionally we live on the Westside of Calgary AB, and that gives us the distinction of having some of the highest average household incomes in all of Canada, and being Canadian means we live in a country that has fared better than most through these economically unsettled times.

You see friends, just like the Wise Men – we too are part of the wealthy, highly educated, ruling class of the non-Israelite

nations – and we are preparing our children and young people to follow in the same path are we not?

But the similarity doesn’t end there friends. We’ve noted that the Wise Men were highly educated and that is in fact that is why they end up in the Christmas story.

And friends I think that we too end up at church on Christmas Eve because we are highly educated.

Let me explain – the Wise Men were educated as astrologers, which meant that they believed they could understand what was going on in the world around them by observing and studying what was happening in the stars.

Now before we dismiss that as silly and foolish, remember - our form of education isn’t all that different. We believe that we can understand what’s going on in the world around us because we observe and study what happens in the natural world via the scientific method.

And the Wise Men saw, as they say, “a star” which indicated to them that there was a King born to the Jews.

In other words they observed something in nature which indicated to them that something significant had occurred and needed them to respond to it. So they travelled to the capital of Israel and began to ask “Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews”

And friends, during the Christmas season its not to hard for an educated person to observe and conclude that something significant, something spiritual, something divine is taking place.

Something that we feel compelled to respond to in some way, and so maybe tonight we’ve respond to that by showing up at church for Christmas Eve, asking “What is this? Who is this? Why is this?”

And friends, our answer comes from the Bible as it tells us the Christmas story – in the same way that the Wise Men received the answer to their question from the Bible.

And in both instances we hear the scriptures say “go to Bethlehem” there you will find what you seek.

The Wise Men found the King they knew had been born, and we discover the Christmas story in its entirety – the reason why we feel like something significant and spiritual is happening.

Because it has! – The Son of God was born into this world in order to save it and its inhabitants from the consequences of our ignorance and disobedience of God’s ways.

And something significant and spiritual is still happening! because all those years ago, in Bethlehem – the King of the Jews, Jesus Christ was born – so that educated, wealthy, outsiders like the Wise Men and ourselves... might be re-born today.

So that what we experience around this time of year which we call the Christmas Spirit – that feeling of peace on earth, good will and generosity towards all men, can become a reality that lives with-in us all year long.

Because friends all the education, the wealth and the career opportunities can't change us on the inside where we know the exact opposite of the Christmas spirit – The Grinch, all too often shows itself during the rest of the year.

And friends, while the decorations, the lights, the carols and candles might stir the Christmas Spirit in our hearts for a few weeks... The Christmas story which leads us to Bethlehem to encounter God in the flesh is what stirs the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts.

Hearing about the birth and life of the baby Jesus and believing in it leads to our rebirth and new life in Him.

Friends, this is why the Christmas story is so important. This is why we can't allow it to be just one more thing on the list of holiday items that we need to check off.

It's the center of the celebration, and as we listened to it, saw the kids act it out and took some time to reflect on it tonight I hope that it has become the center of your Christmas

So that when you leave from here tonight – you leave a slightly different person than when you came – just like the Wise Men, who went back home a different route than the way they came.

That your route home from here friends, is one that knows why all this celebrating is happening. That you understand what is so significant and spiritual about it all, and that having come to church to find out more about it...

You've encountered the Christmas Story and you've become a part of it.

Friends, may you experience the amazing love of God as you continue to celebrate the birth of his Son Jesus tonight and tomorrow. Amen.