

After Jesus was born, wise men showed up in Jerusalem to pay their respects to the next leader of the Jewish nation. By today's standards, these men would have held multiple degrees across a broad spectrum of disciplines. They would've been well versed in astronomy, politics, religion; anything that would help them advise the rulers of their nation. It would have taken them a fair amount of time and dedication and money to get to Jerusalem. That's where we find these wise men, in Jerusalem.

Being wise men, you might think that they would always make good choices. Well, these wise men weren't quite wise enough. Wisdom had suggested it was only natural that they should come to Jerusalem and check in at King Herod's palace. Where else, other than a palace, would you expect to find a newborn king? It was very logical. It was very sensible. It was also incorrect. There was no newborn child in the palace. "So if He's not here, where should we look?" the wondering wise men wanted to know. That's when scholars were summoned, and the Scriptures were consulted.

After picking up some directions from the words of the prophets, the wise men set out again following the star, and found themselves standing before a small, unassuming home in Bethlehem, which was occupied by a Galilean carpenter, his wife Mary, and yes, a baby boy by the name of Jesus. Have you ever started a search for one thing and wound up with something else, something better? That's the story of the wise men! That was the epiphany of these wise men. They were brought to something better than they could have imagined. Whoever the wise men had come to see; they found the Wonderful Counselor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father; the Prince of Peace.

These wise men might surprise us a little; they were not disappointed with what they found. Scripture tells us they rejoiced! They did not hesitate to fall down before the infant Jesus. These men who had seen so much of life, who had dedicated themselves to the accumulation of wisdom, did not consider themselves too grand or too elite to bow down and worship a child. These wise men considered it a privilege to give their gifts to Jesus; gifts which would become the precedent for all future Christmas presents.

We look for one thing, God supplies another. He does it all the time. The childless priest Zechariah set out to burn incense and ended up with a promise that his son would be the forerunner of the Savior. A Samaritan woman went to a well to draw water and found the Savior who gave her forgiveness and a new path to walk. The tax collector Matthew went to his booth to levy tolls and was called to follow the Savior. The widow of Nain began a walk that would end with the burial of her only son; she met Jesus and received not just a living son, but a Savior who cared. The apostle Peter set out to catch some fish and he ended up fishing for souls. Paul had gone on a hunt for Christians and was called by Christ to spend his days proclaiming Him. Mary Magdalene sat before an open tomb and started a search to find her Teacher's dead body; and she saw her living, death-defeating Savior.

Time and again people search for one thing, and in Jesus find something, Someone, far better. In the late 1970s a professional journalist for the Chicago Tribune, who was also an atheist, did an in-depth investigation of the life of Jesus, and to his surprise, emerged from his experience a believer in Christ. His name is Lee Strobel, and he has gone on to write such books as *The Case for Christ*, which became a movie last year.

No matter what our search, God wants to give us something better. Through his word, written in the Bible, God wants to call us away from our sins and bring us to the crucified and risen Christ. Whatever you're looking for from God; he wants to give you the greatest gift of connection and communion with Him. He wants you to know that he has forgiven and forgotten all your sins thanks to Jesus.

Today, no matter what you have been looking for, no matter where you are looking, the Holy Spirit wants you to see Jesus. Don't let the Baby of Bethlehem slip through your world unnoticed. Today, look up from the ordinary and see this great thing that the Lord has done for you; see the One Who has saved you from fear and agony and isolation.

We look for one thing. God supplies another. He gives you Himself. You are given a loving Father. You are given a Best Friend and a Rescuer in Jesus. You are given a Counselor and an Advocate in the Holy Spirit. With all His creative power; With every mystery that He knows; He wants to be in Your life. Your life. Not to dominate you but to love you. Not to keep you from having fun but to show you what life can really be; how good it can really be.

At the beginning of this new year, do something wise. Come see the Gift that Jesus is. He's already been given gold, frankincense and myrrh, so what will you bring to him?

January 7, 2018 + Epiphany Sunday (Observed)
St. Mark Lutheran Church, Chesterland, Ohio
Pastor Mark Matzke