

Title: “Being Found”

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Matthew 2:1-6

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Service Readings: Is. 60:1-6; Eph 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” What Matthew is telling us in this passage is that it is not about finding God but being found by him. It’s about being so important to the creator that he stops at nothing to connect with us.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

That’s it. That is all Matthew gives us as the backstory of the magi. He provides no additional details and leaves us with many unanswered questions. The one on the top of my list is this: how did these men make a connection between a rising star and a newborn king? What had they read or heard that might explain their way of thinking? Matthew doesn’t invite us into that knowledge. He states only that they saw a star and they followed it and the lack of other details implies that they must not be important. But I would like to pause here because maybe there is a point that Matthew is trying to make in these two sentences; and maybe it is a point important enough that he didn’t want it lost among any other detail. In these two verses, he informs us of three activities: A star rose. The wise men saw it. The wise men followed it. What is shown quite plainly is that the wise men were *reacting* to an event. Their travels were as a *response* to a *call*. They saw the star as a sign that beckoned them, that *called* them *towards* someone. Put another way, they wouldn’t have traveled if not for the call. And so, I think Matthew is trying to impress upon us that we don’t move towards Jesus on our own but *as a response* to being called by him. That call might come through a miracle of nature, or it might come in the form of a kind word or gesture from another, but it always precedes the journey.

And there is another message in these same verses as well. Often times I read this passage and think only of the wise men searching for Jesus, and a cursory evaluation of verse two provide more than enough support for this claim. “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” Clearly, they were searching for him. But, again, there seems to be another layer of meaning from Matthew. For if the magi were *responding* to God’s call, then is this less about them *searching* and much more about them *being found*? Didn’t the sign come from God? And wasn’t it a sign that he knew they would surely not overlook? What Matthew is telling us in this passage is that it is not about *finding* God but being found *by* him. It’s about being so important to the creator that he stops at nothing to connect with us.

<pause>

So, God called them, and they responded. And this response led them to Jerusalem in search of this new king. And once in the city, their inquiries became a sign for Herod. This news of a baby king was *his* sign from God. He wasn't monitoring the heavens but was monitoring his political hold and he perceived this birth as a challenge to his reign. God had his attention. He assembled the chief priests and scribes and they led him on his own journey: not out of the city in search of Jesus but into God's Word, and it was there that the king encountered Jesus – right in his own temple.

⁶“And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Face to face; king to king. God sought out Herod and led him to himself. How would he respond? We know from latter verses that his response was not from a heart aligned to God for he sent an army to kill the child in hopes of securing his own political stronghold on the nation. The magi, on the other hand, encountered the bodily presence of God and responded in worship. Two very different responses to God's call; two very different responses to an encounter with Jesus.

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Two thousand years later God still works in similar ways. He calls each one of us, individually, through the relationships of other people or through the wonders of nature. And by this calling he leads us to his Word where we encounter him. And for those who believe, for those who respond to this call by faith, the journey doesn't end in God's Word but instead begins. Unlike the magi, we don't lay our gifts at the foot of our king and then travel back to our homeland, our old life. We have no gifts worthy of a king. Instead, in our baptism we present *ourselves* as gifts to him: sinful and unclean. We lay ourselves at his feet as an offering, not one of worthiness but unworthiness. We offer ourselves not for his benefit but for ours. We are not the givers of any gift but the receivers and the gift we receive is life altering. He accepts us as we are and then he washes us with his own blood, the sacrificial blood that he poured out on the cross. He puts to death our old life and raises us to our new. He makes us clean and he makes us blameless; he makes us fitting to be presented as a gift to our Father.

We have been called by him; we have been led to his Word where we have encountered him. The Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts and has led us to our baptism where we have been washed clean and made holy. But our journey doesn't end at the baptismal font. Our journey has only just begun for he continues to call us to himself. The magi had a single star, a single experience, a single call. Their journey ended when they met God face to face a single time. But we meet God every time we read or hear his word. In those times we come face to face to hear him, and to invite him to work in our hearts. And he calls us to his table where we encounter him, through his body and his blood, and where we experience the grace of his forgiveness.

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2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

The star rose, and the magi followed it, in search of their king. They knew not where he was but in faith trusted that the sign God provided would lead them to him. Thirty-three years later the son of God rose from the grave and we now follow him. We no longer ask, "Where is he" because we know where he can be found: in his Word and in his Sacraments. We no longer search for him because he has already found us, saved us, and promised us everlasting life.

Let us forever follow him.

Please pray with me.

Almighty God, through the death of your Son you have destroyed sin and death. Through his resurrection you have restored innocence and eternal life. We who are delivered from the power of the devil may live in your kingdom. Give us grace that we may believe this with our whole heart. Enable us, always, to steadfastly praise and thank you in this faith, through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

(Luther's prayer)