

Looking For God
Matthew 2:1-12 January 2, 2011
Epiphany

- i. In the time of Herod, after Jesus was born, there came from the east three wise guys; Avesta, Zorro, and Mazda. “Where is he? Huh? So, where is he? He’s supposed to be here. We come all this way and now we can’t find him. Avesta, I told you following that star was a stupid idea. Now we’re lost. I told you that we should have gotten directions maybe even brought a map. But NO -- not you, not the great Avesta. Just follow the star, he says. Just follow the star. How stupid can you be? Don’t you notice that the star moves through the night and that it’s so far up, you can’t even tell what town it’s over, much less what street or house? If you’d just asked for directions.”

Having heard enough, Avesta defensively breaks in, “Zorro, if I would have wanted to hear that sort of stuff I would have brought my wife. We don’t need no stinkin’ map or directions. We’ve got the star.”

That was enough to finally bring Mazda into the conversation.

“The star – the star. That stupid star. We’re suppose to be following this star to the birthplace of the world’s next great leader and it’s only

brought us to Judah, this stupid little vassle state of Rome.

And haven't you noticed, I mean, are you totally blind?

Look around dude, these people here aren't even Zoroastrians like us, they're Jews.

You fool!

What great ruler is going to come from the Jews?

The Jews. Really. Man -- give me a break.

They're just vassals of one empire after another.

Avesta, Zorro's right.

We need to ask for directions."

"Fine!" responds Avesta.

"What are we suppose to do just go up to anybody and ask,

"Where is the child who has been born king of...of... of the Jews?"

"Yeah, replied Zorro, that would be a good start."

"Fine!" "Just Fine!"

So, that's what the three wise guys did.

They went from person to person asking,

"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?"

As you can guess, most people thought they were nuts.

Some said,

"Are you talking about Herod?

He's is the King of the Jews, but he was born a long time ago.

And nobody in their right mind really wants to go see

him.”

You see, brutal King Herod was that most dangerous kind of powerful person:

an insecure and fearful one, eaten up with worry about maintaining his power and his place and his comfort, his unearned advantages, if you will, his *privilege*.

Protecting all of those things can demand a lot of energy from a person, especially since Herod wasn't a *real* king; he was just a puppet of the Empire, the hated and oppressive Roman Empire. [Kate Huey, S.A.M.U.E.L. Jan 2, 2011]

“Well?” asked Mazda, “What do you guys think? Do we go see this guy Herod?”

“I don't know,” said Avesta suspiciously, “he doesn't exactly sound like the kind of guy we're looking for.” Let's check with that guard over there, maybe he can give us some help.”

“Excuse us Mr. Guard, but -- do you know where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?”

At that the guard looked at them with the eyes of someone who had just heard a very bad joke, told very badly.”

“You guys stay right here, I'll be back shortly.”

With that the guard left and walked into this very large and beautiful building, next to which they just happen to be standing.

“Where do you think he’s going,” asked Mazda.
“Why do you think he wants us to stay right here?
This isn’t feeling right.”

Just then a voice rings out,
“Guards seize those three wise guys.”
It was the guard who had told them to stay put that
was yelling the orders.
Within seconds, Avesta, Zorro and Mazda were
surrounded by big, ugly, mean looking guys in armor
and carrying spears and swords.

The three wise guys, shivering from fear looked at
each other.
Then Mazda with terror in his eyes, screams at
Avesta,
“Look what you’ve got us into now.”
“Me,” screams back Avesta,
“It wasn’t my idea to ask directions.
Remember, I was just following the star.”

Within minutes the three wise guys found themselves
in a huge, spectacular room and thrown down at the
feet of a man wearing a crown.

“So what is this I hear,” said the man wearing the
crown.
“Do I understand correctly that you are looking for a
child who will be the next King?”

“Yes,... Yeah, that’s right.”
Avesta fearfully replied, barely able to get the words

out of his mouth.

“We saw his star rising and we want to pay him homage.”

“Hum,” Herod thought for a second and then called out,

“Bring me a scribe.”

In a few moments, a man fumbling with an armful of scrolls came to join the discussion.

“Scribe,” yelled the man the wise guys by now had figured out was King Herod, “is it true that there is to be a baby born who is going to relieve me and my family of this position I hold?

And answer it very carefully, because if they are right, I must tell you, I am more than a little curious as to why you scribes and the priests haven’t told me about this.”

With great trepidation and legs barely able to hold him up, the scribe, now fearing for his life, began to explain.

“Your Highness, I am sorry, oh God help me, I am so sorry; but I fear that the wise guys may be right.”

“What?” bellowed the King.

“Yes, I’m sorry,”

said the scribe as he fell to his knees and bowing his head,

“I don’t know how we missed it.

Please you highness, you must understand that there are a lot of words and scrolls and they’re not in any order and they’re scattered all over and there are many different versions, and re-writes and it’s not

always easy to find what's in there, and, and, and... well, when the question was ask, I did suddenly remembered something that I had read."

Unrolling one of the scrolls, the scribe pointed to a text and said, "Yes, here it says,

"In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

"I am so sorry, your highness, we just didn't get the timing quite right."

"Away with him," screamed the King, "get him out of my sight. You're nothing but a worthless bag of academia."

Then turning to the Wise Guys, whose eyes were about to pop out of their sockets, the King's manner suddenly changed.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen," said the King in a manner so charming as to disarm the three wise guys,

"I am so grateful to you for this wonderful news of this incredible birth.

It is just marvelous to hear such awfu...awe...inspiring news.

Please, with my humble blessing, go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

With that, the three wise guys began their 6 mile trek to Bethlehem.

“See Avesta, I told you, I told you,” bragged Zorro, “all we had to do was ask for directions. Where did you get your Magi license anyway? Following a star, what a dumb idea.”

- II. Well, as we know the three wise guys found the child, who as the story unfolds, we find out doesn't become merely the King of Judah, but rather becomes the sovereign of God's realm, to be called the son of the Most High, and even said to be an actual manifestation, the incarnation, of God. So we too go looking for God, just as the wise guys went searching.
 - A. Sometimes following stars, sometimes seeking direction, sometimes reading the scriptures; and like the wise guys, we are usually surprised by where we find God.
 - B. The wise guys were expecting to find him in the places of power and might.
 - C. They sought wonderful signs and wonders, cosmic revelations and divine epiphanies.

- D. But they found the new ruler in pitted town in a pitiful country.
And what they found was not at all what they were expecting;
no power or distinction or wealth.
They found a poor family, and a hungry little baby in a dwelling barely qualifying as shelter.
- E. Remember Elijah, who when seeking God's voice did not find it in the earthquake, or the storm and not in the fire, but then in silence he finally heard God's voice.
Like Elijah, we and the wise guys go seeking God in the places of power only to find God in the humble places, not in the rich king on the throne but in the humble poor baby.
- F. We too will find God in the places we least expect to find God.
- G. So, what do we hear in this story?
We hear that God has sent a gentle ruler, a shepherd who will nevertheless upset the powers-that-have-been.
We hear that the smallest things, like a newborn baby, can terrify the arrogant, and bring them down in the end.
We learn that God's reach of grace goes far

beyond every obstacle within or without, and pushes us beyond them, too. [Katy Huey]

III. Often times our search for God opens up to us many more questions.

A. When were times that you felt you were seeking God in your life?

1. Was it only at times of need or suffering, or was it an intellectual search, or did it come from a deep, personal hunger for meaning?
2. How faithful were you, and diligent, in the search?
3. How do you seek God?
4. What are the paths and things and methods that help you "find" your way to God?

B. The wise men find the star alone insufficient as a guide, and they innocently turn to one king (a lesser, and evil one) for guidance to the real King.

Fear is the response, not just from the powerful, threatened king, the "power-that-has-been," but from the religious establishment, and from the entire town ("all Jerusalem" it says).

Think of the times that fear dictated your

first response to something new, even to something promising.

What did you, and those around you, fear?

C. And when you found God, did you find what you were expecting or something quite different.

1. If what you found is the God you were expecting, then I think it is quite possible that the God you found, is merely the God of your own making.
2. If what you find fills you with awe and mystery and surprise and wonder, then you're probably on the right path.

D. The most important thing, however, -- is to keep looking.

AMEN.