

On Becoming Wise—Matthew 2:1-2

During this long holiday season—starting with Thanksgiving and continuing through Christmas, now into the New Year— **I wonder how often you have felt a need for a strong dose of wisdom.**

In a certain conversation????—help me become wise!!

Or in a series of challenging conversations—haven't you wanted wisdom?

Or in some relationship!

Or in a certain task or responsibility, you have wanted wisdom.

You wanted some wisdom to carry you beyond the present problem!

You wanted wisdom to cope with the unpredictable predicament!

What is the **wise thing** to do in a certain situation?

What is the **wise word** to say to someone?

In some journey of vocation, career, or course of study— what is the wise end to seek?.....

At Grandview Park Presbyterian in Kansas City, Kansas, they are celebrating Dia Tres Reyes this morning. Three Kings Day!

The day has its roots in a Middle Ages Christian feast day and a dramatic, liturgical celebration in the church and streets.

A subtle feature of the Epiphany Story is that the three kings begin....by asking....a question:

“Where is the child?”

Doesn't that question spark all that unfolds in the Story of the Three Kings?

“Where....is....the...child?”

Curiosity!

Wanting to know!

Where **is** this special child?

Where do we **find** the Christ child?

Where should we look?

Recently I have been involved with one or two other people in several community problem solving situations....arising from different kinds of conflicts....involving a number of people.....

And the question of what to say.....how to begin saying it.....seemed to rise constantly to the forefront.

What are the first words to say?

Have any of you had a similar kind of experience lately!

Perhaps you were trying to settle the conflict. Resolve some confusion.

Or maybe you were more involved, even on the receiving or engaging end of the conflict or confusion. (pause)

If we want to learn to become wise like the Magi, we start by asking a question.

And we keep asking questions.

“Where is the child?”

Become curious.

What is the question I need to ask now?

And how shall I ask it?

Before a blow lands on anyone, including yourself, you blurt out instead—*“Wait!.....I have a question!”*

Help me understand!

And if that doesn't work for very long—

“Wait! I have another question?”

Start walking around your situation...the person, your predicament, and ask it—ask him!—ask her!—questions from all sides & every angle.

Now you are becoming wise!.....

“Where is the child?”

If the 3 kings came to Kansas City today and asked, “Where is the child?”, where would you direct them.

And then the story has another, more obvious lesson on becoming wise:

Follow the star!

Matthew says of the Magi—*“And a star went before them.”*

Think of yourself now as a being a Magi in training.

You are an apprentice Magi!

You are on the way to becoming one of the wise Magi

And the way you do that is by making **their** story....**your** prayer.

You pray the Epiphany story within yourself. (Kneel)

“And a star went before me.” “A star is going before me.”

“A star is going before me right now at this time in my life.”

May I find the star that is going before metoday!(get up)

Suppose you begin praying that scripture line a few minutes a day.

See what happens. See where that prayer leads you.

“Why do that?”, you might ask?

It’s theological, meaning it’s God stuff! But there’s also a practical reason!

Because!—when a star is leading you—then all other matters that typically lead you are not going to be able to take the lead.

For instance!—if a star is leading you—then your worries and your fears will not be leading you.

If a star is leading you—then your discouragements and disappointments are not leading you.

*“God, let a star go ahead of me, instead of **my regrets & my mistakes!***

God, let a star go ahead of me, rather than any misgivings I have & any unforgiving attitudes I am harboring—toward others & toward myself!”

“And a star went before them, until it came to rest over the place where the child was.”

Christmas is all about birth.

Christmas is actually one, big long experience of birth!

Christ the Savior is born!

And just as you ultimately have to find the star, not in the sky, but inside of you....you also have to experience Christ being born within you....within the scope of your life and the current setting of our world.

We are being called to help Christ be born!

If those three kings were to come to Kansas City today and ask, “*Where is the child?*”—I don’t see how we could say anything else but.....

“Head for the border.”

The child is being born at the Mexico-US border.

What are we going to do to help Christ be born on that border?

This week, there is a follow up report on the girl whose pleading voice became the voice of the family separations. Remember her? We just heard the recording, there was no video. And she had her aunt’s phone number & wanted to call the aunt after being separated from the mother.

She is now with her mother and waiting for an asylum decision, which may take 6-12 months. She is in school, has already learned quite a bit of English. Her mother was asked why they came. “*Because a drug gang was going to steal her and sell her.*” She replied. “This will happen if we have to go back.

“Where is the child?”

I want to close with a story about a different border, one my brother told me over the holiday.

The border between Canada and the United States used to be crossed informally. People passed back and forth freely. People would marry

across the border. Fire protection was shared. Buildings spanning the border would even be built.

Since 9/11 and now with the current immigration crisis, the border is guarded much more carefully. As a result, families are often caught on one or the other side of the border. They have to go through Customs.

Lots of families are stuck, caught on one or the other side of the border with no way to get together.

In Vermont, the Haskell Free Library is one of those buildings that spans the border. Inside the library, a line marks which country you are in.

The only Library entrance is on the US side.

There is a walkway from the Canadian side, marked with flower pots, which, if you follow it directly, leads you to the entrance without having to go to the Customs office.

So, divided families have started meeting at the library to briefly come together.

US Homeland Security officers and Canadian Customs officers are aware this is going on, but haven't intervened. Even in the library are signs saying that the library is not a place for divided families to meet.

But the library staff just work away as the families reunite.

The spirit of Christmas?

“Where is the child?”

“May the star go before you.”

Rev. Scott Myers, Epiphany Sunday/Three Kings day, Jan 6, 2019
Westport Presbyterian Church

