

Matthew 2:1-12

**Wise Men Still Seek Him** - you've probably seen those words on a T-shirt or a poster, on a bumper sticker or a yard sign. I remember the first time I saw it I thought, hey, that's really **catchy**. I'll bet I could use it in a **sermon** sometime. Besides the fact that it's a **catchy** phrase, it's also **true** - **Wise Men Still Seek Jesus**. But unfortunately, many **other** people don't know **how** or **where** to find Him. They're completely **lost** - they haven't got a **clue** about where to even **begin**. But in **reality**, finding the Lord Jesus is really quite **simple** - it's just a matter of using the **tools** which you have been **given**. In our text for today, the Magi from the East had the right idea. They made a diligent **search** for the Christ Child, making use of all the **tools** which the LORD had provided for them. And when they **found** Him, they were not too proud to get down on their **knees** and **worship** Him. This morning, let's take a look at these **Magi** - men who were truly **wise**.

There are many **traditions** which surround the Magi. The most familiar tradition is that there were **three** of them. That **assumption** is based on the **fact** that they brought three kinds of **gifts** - gifts of gold, of incense, and of myrrh. But, we really don't know **how many** wise men there were. Over the centuries many **other** traditions began to surround the Magi. In the 2nd century they were transformed into **kings**. By the 8th century they had been given **names**, specific **homelands**, and even **physical** descriptions - **Melchior** of Arabia, an **old** man; **Gaspar** of Tharsis, a **young** man; and **Balthazar** of Saba, a mature black man. But the Bible doesn't tell us **any** of that. It simply says that they came from the **East**. They may have been Medes, or Persians, or Babylonians - there may have been 3 or 30 of them. We don't **know**, and it really doesn't **matter** either. The Magi **themselves** are not particularly **important**, so God didn't give us much **information** about them. However, the **reason** they came **is** important. They were looking for the **Christ Child**, so they could **worship** Him, and **honor** Him with their gifts. **Their** individual characteristics are left in the **shadows**, so that the light of the **Christ Child** would shine more **brilliantly**.

How the Magi had **learned** about this Christ Child is **also** a mystery to us. But at any rate, they had no **doubts** about who it was for whom they were looking. They knew He was a **child**, and they knew He was a **king**. The information they were **lacking** was just exactly **where** He would be **born**. That's where the **LORD** helped them out, by means of a **star**. As was true of the Wise Men themselves, lots of **conjectures** have been made, and **traditions** have been formed regarding that star. Yet, the fact remains **again** that God hasn't given us many **details** about it.

Perhaps God used a **star** as a sign because the Magi were **astronomers** - men who were continually **watching** the stars. I think it is very interesting that even though finding a new star in the heavens must have been a tremendously **exciting** event for these men, they don't appear to be overly **preoccupied** with it. Somehow, they seemed to know that the **star** was not all that important **itself**. So, they aren't particularly **concerned** when the star later **disappeared** for a while. Instead, they traveled 1,000 miles or more, in order to find the **Child** to whom that star **belonged**. And they came for only **one** reason - to **worship** Him.

When the star led them to **Judea**, naturally they came **first** to Jerusalem - the **capital** city. After all, they were looking for a **king**, and where **else** would you expect to find the King of the Jews? However, in Jerusalem, they encountered King **Herod** - a king who was immensely **different** from the one they were **seeking**. Herod was a man who had come up through the **ranks** to become the King of Judea. I think it's rather interesting that although he **ruled** the Jews, he was actually **not** a Jew himself, and he wasn't very well **accepted** by them either. It wasn't that Herod lacked **ability**. In reality, Herod was a **very** capable ruler. He was known as a builder of many fine buildings - including a palace for **himself**; as well as a theater, an amphitheater, and a hippodrome for the **people**. In order to try and win the **support** of the Jews, he also carried out an extensive enlarging and beautification program for the **Temple**.

But in spite of his strong capabilities, Herod was far too **crafty** and **cruel** to be widely accepted. He had **murdered** almost his entire **family** - as well as anyone **else** who even **appeared** to threaten his claim to the title, "**King of the Jews.**" Therefore, it was very important to him **also**, to find out where this **Christ Child** had been born. So Herod, unaware of the Old Testament prophecies **himself**, brought in the **chief priests** of the people to **aid** the Magi in locating the Child. The prophecies were **clear**, and they told the Wise Men that the Child was to be born in **Bethlehem** in Judah.

So, the search was **on** once again, and it would seemingly be a **long** and **difficult** search. How would they be able to **find** this one special baby in all of Bethlehem? Had they perhaps traveled all that way only to be frustrated at the **end** of their search? Not at all, for at the very time when they **needed** more help, the **LORD** was there for them again, and He caused the special **star** to appear once **more**. Now, you know that the stars appear to move across the sky from **east to west**. But not **this** star. It literally led the Magi from **north to south**, and then it **stopped** directly above the **house** where Jesus was. That's right, it stopped over a

**house.** The Magi didn't go to the **stable** as the shepherds had done. Their arrival was **at least** 40 days later, and **possibly** even much later than that. And so **another** piece of Christmas tradition bites the dust. There were **no wise men** from the East at the **stable** on Christmas Day.

However, the **gifts** of the Magi are **not** just a tradition - they are a **fact**. We read, "*On coming to the house, they saw the Child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and **worshipped** Him. Then they opened their **treasures** and presented Him with **gifts** of gold, and of incense, and of myrrh.*" All of these gifts have a **variety** of uses, but the early church fathers recognized that the Magi had chosen their gifts very **carefully**. They were gifts which were quite **significant**. First of all, **gold** immediately suggests **royalty** - it was truly a gift fit for a **king**. Then there was **incense** - an item which was used especially to bring gifts and requests of **God** - and here again, the **Christ Child** was a worthy receiver. Finally, there was the gift of **myrrh**. Myrrh was used as a **preservative** - especially for **embalming** human bodies at **death** - a vivid reminder that this **God** and **king** had now through His birth **also** become a **man** who would **die** for the sins of the world.

There is still one **more** thing which came about as a result of the Magi's search for the Baby Jesus - **evil** was **thwarted**. We read, "*Having been warned in a dream **not** to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by **another** route.*" We shouldn't be too surprised that the Magi, even with their great **wisdom**, didn't see through the **hypocrisy** of King Herod right away. These men were **sincerely** motivated in their search for the Savior, and they assumed that **others** would be **equally** as sincere. When it was revealed to them that Herod only meant to **harm** the Child, they did **not** return to tell him what they had found.

Today, **Wise Men Still Seek Him** - and you and I are **among** those wise men. However, the search for the Savior is a lot **easier** for us, than it was for the **Magi**. They were guided by a **star** - but, **God's Word** is the only tool **we** need, because there in His **Word** God has clearly **revealed** His Son to us. And that same **Word** encourages us to **respond** to God's revelation by getting down on our **knees** to humbly approach Him in **worship** and **prayer**. The wisdom of **God's Word** is always **available** to us. We can either **use** it, or **reject** it. So, what will we **do**? Will we be like **self-centered** King **Herod** - who looked for the Christ Child only because he was **paranoid**, and wanted to **kill** Him to protect his **own** title and position in life? Or will we be like the **Magi** - men who trustingly followed the signs which **God** gave to them - men who traveled great **distances**, and who went

to great **expense**, all to **worship** the Christ Child?

My friends, don't be too **proud** to get down on your **knees**, and ask God for **help**. Don't be afraid to get down on your **knees** as you ask God for **strength** and **guidance**, as you **also** seek the **Lord** and His **will** for your life. Even in the **darkest** and most **doubtful** moments of our lives, **God's Word** will always guide us on **straight** paths. Don't be afraid to get down on your **knees** as you ask God to use us to bring His Word to **encourage** the members of our congregation who have been **less** than faithful in their church and communion attendance in the past. God's **love** will always show us that **Wise Men Still Seek Him**. Don't be afraid to get down on your **knees** as you ask God to provide us with all the **resources** we need in our congregation to carry out **all** the work He has given us to **do**. Everything comes from the **LORD**, and He provides us with **everything** we need. As we live our lives as **Wise Men Who Still Seek Him**, may we continue to **look** for the Lord Jesus and His blessings in His Holy **Word** and **Sacraments**. And when we **find** Him there, as we always **will**, may we always be sure to get down on our **knees**, and give Him **thanks** for His blessings to us, in our **worship** and in our **prayers**. Amen.