

Have you looked out on a “cold winter’s night” to see a star so bright that you stop to look and wonder? A star so bright that you felt it was guiding you? Leading you?

Imagine looking tonight at the night sky and seeing a star standing apart from all the other thousand stars you see. Imagine seeing a sign, hearing a voice, feeling a nudge; “Come follow me. Follow me and I will lead you where you will find the child that will transform the world. Come, follow me. (pause) And imagine that you do.

Imagine you pack your bag, charge your I-Phone, download the app “Follow that Star” and step out in faith. Not knowing where you are going. Not knowing how long you will be gone. Not knowing what you will encounter along the way. But, you DO know, that it will be something so special, so life-changing that you cannot miss the opportunity. Can you imagine doing that?

Can you imagine persisting, even when you lose sight of the star? Imagine you stay steadfast and keep looking and when the star reappears you rejoice and you follow where it leads.

And after months of travel, the star leads you to a house, to Joseph and Mary and Jesus (probably a toddler by now). Jesus turns in his mother’s arms, looks at you, smiles and reaches out his hand and you fall down and worship. Can you imagine doing that?

The bumper sticker says, “Wise Men Still Seek Him. Do you?”

The wise men are such a compelling figures in our first Christmas story. In Luke, we have shepherds who are poor and fearful, but come to worship. In Matthew we have Magi who are powerful and faithful, but come to worship. In our first Christmas story, they are always there. Three men dressed as kings, often with crowns and camels. One may look Persian, one may look African, one may look Asian. They all look stately in their flowing robes. They are always there in the manger, delivering their gifts. We even have names for them: Melchor, Gaspar and Baltasar. We have a hymn “We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts, we traverse afar. Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.”

The interesting thing is that all these details, these images that we hold so clearly and vividly in our minds. That we celebrate across the world on January 6th — are not found in our Bible reading from Matthew. They are not found in the Bible at all. Yet, they are Christian traditions that we hold dear.

Barbara Brown Taylor, in her Book Home By Another Way says:

“So much has been made of this story about which we know so little. They were not kings, of course, and there were not three of them, at least not according to Matthew. We do not know who they were, where they came from, or how many of them there were. We do not know how long it took them to get to Bethlehem or how old Jesus was by the time they got there. We are not even

sure about that famous star.

“It’s not that facts don’t matter. It’s just that they don’t matter as much as the stories do, and stories can be true whether they happened or not.”

So, let’s take some time to look at the truth that these stories tell. Let’s take some time to see what qualities we know these magi had. Let’s take some time to see how we can become magi ourselves.

1. We can look for guidance. These wise men looked at the same sky as millions of other people, yet millions did not flock to Bethlehem. They discerned something different. They saw with different eyes. They were spiritually awake. They saw the truth that was guiding them. They had the wisdom to not fall into Herod’s trap. We too can wake up and follow the truth and in doing so we can avoid trouble. We can find a way home by another way.
2. We can be persistent. We can step forward in faith and not quit when we temporarily lose our way. We can get up everyday and walk in faith. We can stay on the path. We can keep putting one foot in front of the other.
3. We can be humble. We can kneel down before Jesus. We can pray for God’s will and ask for his power to carry that out each day. Like the camel we can lay our burdens down at night and rest knowing that God is there to see us through.

4. We can be grateful. No matter how much or how little we have we can show appreciation for all God does in our lives. We can express gratitude through loving kindness to others, even those we do not know.
5. We can be generous. The wise men brought riches and their best. We can be generous with our time, with our appreciation and with our best. We can give away what has been so freely given to us, knowing that there is always enough in God's world.

The wise men persisted in following the light that was given them until they found the object of their search - the Star Child - Jesus Christ. They responded in worship and they returned home to share their experience with others.

What are our gifts? What do we have to give? Our love, our devotion, and our service. Like the wise men, we can go forth from this place spreading the good news - Christ is born - he has come to make disciples of us and together we will transform the world. And we will carry the message Peace on Earth, Good Will toward Men.

Let us pray:

Lord, Jesus, may we be like the wise men who followed the star until they found you. Give us wisdom to seek you, perseverance to follow you, and humility to worship you - this day and every day of the year.

I do not have gold to give you, but I do have frankincense and myrrh, and with your permission, I would like to annoint your hands. Myrrh on your left hand and frankincense on your right. If you woud come forward, stay to pray if you would like and then return to your seats.

Now,

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his contenance upon you
and give you peace. ”