

## From the Pastor's Desk

### Star Gazers

*The Shepherds went on their way and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.* Matthew 2:9 *They found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.* Luke 2:16

Following stars and finding stables is a common human experience. Who among us has not at some time in our life fixed our gaze on some high and lofty star only to find it leads to a stable.

Many examples could be given. A young man graduates from high school full of great dreams and expectations about the future only to wake up one day and discover himself enmeshed in the very drudgery that he had promised himself he would avoid.

A man or woman comes to retirement age. They think of all the good things they're going to be able to do. After a few weeks, however, they begin to discover that retirement is not exactly what they thought it would be. The days start growing longer. The hours become more oppressive.

All of us at some time in our life followed a star only to discover a stable. The challenge is seeing the presence of God in the stable. We can learn this from the wise men women of Epiphany. There had to be women with them because they stopped and asked for directions! Here are a few things they wise people teach us.

1. They met God in the midst of their work. God meets us right where we are at. These astrologers were doing their jobs when God spoke to them and he can do the same in our lives. God walks with us in our work.
2. They saw beyond the physical and responded with their hearts. Before they gave what they had in their hands, they first recognized God in Christ and gave their hearts to him in homage. God wants our lives.
3. They found Jesus through suffering and obstacles. They experienced a culture barrier, distance barrier, language barrier, racial barrier, and because they were Gentiles, a religious barrier. Faith is not always a picnic. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it "Costly Grace" because it costs us our lives. God can speak to us through suffering and hardship.
4. They were willing to take action. They made a long journey that forever changed their lives. They put commitment to their conviction. They put feet to their faith. When they got their sign, they moved. Sometimes God calls us to make moves and these moves can be dramatic. God calls us to step out in faith.
5. They found Christ in a different culture, religion and among different people than their own. The Wise Men saw beyond race, culture and creeds. They were not afraid to be stretched beyond their own religion. Their God was a big God and not tribal. Are you keeping God in an understandable and predictable shoebox? God stretches us beyond our comfort zones.

An old Jewish story tells of a rabbi who asked his disciples, "How do you know when the night is ending and the morning is coming?"

One of the disciples stood and said, "Teacher, won't you know that night is fading when, through the dim light, you can see an animal and recognize whether it is a sheep or a dog?"

The rabbi answered, "No."

"Rabbi," asked another. "Won't you know that the dawn is coming when you can see clearly enough to distinguish whether a tree is a fig or an olive?"

"No," responded the teacher. "You'll know that the night has passed when you can look at any man and any woman and discern that you are looking at a brother or a sister. Until you can see with that clarity, the night will always be with us."

PB