

The Rev Frank F. Wilson  
St. Timothy's Episcopal Church  
January 3, 2020

**II Christmas, Year "B":** Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 84; Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a;  
Matthew 2:1-15, 19-23

**Title:** Seekers

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In most years at this time we re-visit the quite familiar and delightful story of the visit of the so called three wise men who travel from the east to seek out and pay homage to the child Jesus. You may know that some have suggested, maybe wisely suggested, that this story most likely would have proceeded much differently had these characters from the east been not wise *men* but rather three wise *women*.

To begin with, rather than trying to read signs in the heavens they would have no doubt stopped and asked for directions. Furthermore, rather than standing around trying to look important rather than clueless, women would have helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, and made a casserole. Besides all that, rather than bringing herbs and spices no one needed, they would have brought practical gifts that the family could have actually used. And finally, if women were in charge there would, in fact, be peace on earth.

Well, I have to tell you -- based on my experience and observation of men trying to run the world, this sounds about right to me.

But the text says that it was three wise men that came from the east to pay homage to this child whom they somehow knew to be no ordinary child and who would, in fact, be a presence that was destined to change the world.

You know, not a lot is known about the wise men except that they were foreigners and they were wise. And as re-read this story in preparation of this sermon -- this story about the birth and the early life of Jesus -- it occurred to me that to attend to the following question would go a long way to explaining why we find this story so

compelling and so important to our common life in the faith community. And that question is this: Why did the author of this Gospel According to Matthew consider the wise men to be wise? I'll give you what I believe to be the answer to that question, and then I will share why I believe it to be so.

The wise men were called wise because they were seekers. They were seekers of 'the good.' They were seekers of the Holy. They were seekers of truth. They were seekers of those places and spaces where God is present, and God is known, and where God is recognized as uniquely, especially, peculiarly, and even desperately relevant. In other words, we call these men wise because they were seekers of that place where one is at home with God.

I am reminded of a story told by Marcus Borg in one of his books – which one I cannot now remember. Borg reports this as a true story in which a couple had recently given birth to their second child. And very soon thereafter, their first-born, a daughter, began asking if she could have some alone time, private time with her new sibling. Well, as you might imagine, the parents were a little wary; not quite sure what to make of this request. But as their daughter was so insistent, asking repeatedly that she be allowed to be alone with her new baby brother, they devised a plan to honor the request. Having installed a baby monitor, and staying close by, they told their daughter that she could go into the baby's room, close the door, and visit for a few minutes. What they heard was quite astounding. They heard their daughter approach the crib and say to her new baby brother: Tell me about God. I'm starting to forget.

Dear ones, maybe it is that the moment we are born, we become seekers. Maybe it is that the moment we are born, we seek a unity, a reuniting with that which is holy and sacred. Maybe it is that our life's journey is a journey, a seeking of that path or paths that lead us home.

Well, now with that said, let's take a little closer look at our story from the Gospel this morning. First, I observe that all of the players are clearly experiencing a kind of restlessness, a yearning to be in harmony with God's will in and for their lives. One might say they are experiencing a yearning to get home to that place where there is peace and a kind of spiritual, as well as existential unity that can only be found in the

presence of God. Ironically all are willing to leave home in search of that home where God is the house holder.

In Luke's version of this story, Mary and Joseph are compelled to leave their home in Nazareth and go to Bethlehem where Mary gives birth to Jesus, Emmanuel, God With Us, and thus assume the role of parenting this child for that is their calling.

In Mathew's version, the Holy family is compelled to leave their home in Bethlehem and re-settle in Egypt in order to keep safe their first born – all of this because the powers that be see Jesus as a threat to their power and their personal agenda, and thus would destroy the Prince of Peace. And we know that the holy family will eventually find their way home to a new home in Nazareth such that Jesus would come to be called a Nazarene.

But dear ones, the point is not that we find in this story examples of people searching for new homes. It is that we have people listening for, making themselves available to hear God's voice, God's calling, God's agenda and who are receptive to it.

[[ In this story, Mathew is fond of reporting the medium of God's voice to be dreams. Mary saw God in a vision, maybe not unlike something of a dream, wherein God tells her of the role she is to play in the divine plan.

Joseph also experienced God in a dream wherein God assures him that he is to take Mary as his wife.

The wise men also heard God's voice in a dream -- a dream urging them to not oblige a certain civil authority – that is say Herod's request that they return so as to reveal the location of the Christ child. Rather they were to take a different route home.

God has many voices. Mathew will strongly suggest that one of the ways God speaks is through dreams. But we also know that God speaks to us as a consequence of our prayers and our meditations. God speaks to us through scripture. Sometimes God speaks to us through other persons – sometimes persons we would never expect to be a messenger of God. And yes God can speak to us through poetry and even the splendor of a sunset.]]

But the point is, [*As we make ourselves available*] God does speak if we but have ears to hear. God does speak but we hear only if we have positioned ourselves to be receptive to the hearing. Another way of saying the same thing is that we hear God's voice when we are in relationship with God. And we might know that where there is no relationship with God, it is not God who has withdrawn from us but rather us from God. And in such times, I would argue that our vocation is to reclaim our status as seeker; to hear what God would have us hear; go where God would have us go and do what God would have us do.

Dear ones, life is a journey. That is as true in the life of a church, a congregation, as it is for us as individuals. And so here at this time of Christmas, this season of new birth and new beginnings, this season when we celebrate the birth of Christ, God with us, let us be reminded that the journey is a good journey only as we continually are seeking God's will and God's voice in our lives.

I invite you to continue the journey. And I invite you, as a child of God, to enter into those places where God is present; where God is welcome; and where God is constantly saying, welcome home.

Amen