

Another Road
Matthew 2:1-12

I want to start this morning by taking a short poll. First: How many of you still have your Christmas Tree up? Second: What do you have on the top of your Christmas tree, a star or an angel. How many of you have stars on top of your tree? How many of you have angels?

The reason I asked the first question is: Christmas, from the Christian perspective isn't truly over until January 6th or Epiphany, the day we traditionally celebrate the visit by the Wise Men. The reason I asked the second question is: I think there are two types of people. Some are star people, and some are angel people.

Biblically, the Angel represents those who had been waiting for the Messiah, for a sign from God, for a long time, like the Shepherds. They knew what the Angel meant when he told them about a Savior, a Messiah. They remembered the old prophecies. They remembered with anticipation.

And the Star was for those who were still searching, those still unsure, those still with questions, those on a quest to find out about this mystery and message from God wrapped up in human flesh and swaddling clothes.

A friend reminded me that God sent both the Angel and the Star because God always meets us where we are. He met the shepherds in their fields, doing their duty, watching their sheep. Some dozing, some sleeping, all awakened by the Glory that shone around them. While God met the Wise Men, the travelers and searchers from the East as they searched the stars for answers to the meaning of life. These foreign travelers became the first ones to witness this newborn Messiah, the Savior of the world because God chose to meet them where they were in their journey of life.

Nobody really knows what country the Wise Men came from. Some commentators say they were from Arabia or Mesopotamia. Some from Persia, modern-day Iran. Others say Babylon, modern-day Iraq. Some say they were from even further away, as far away as India.

But we don't know, all of that is basically conjecture. Scripture simply says they were wise men from the East. It doesn't even say there were three of them. There could have been two, there could have been twenty. All we know is they brought three gifts: Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. They were from the East. And they traveled a long way, following a star, to find this baby who would be King.

What we do know for sure is that God met them amid the circumstances of their life. God met them where they were. But notice, God didn't leave them there.

Just like God didn't leave the Shepherds at the manger. The Angel's message to the shepherds had been so compelling that they went running with haste, they dropped everything and skedaddled over to see this baby. And when they went back to their flocks, they went back changed, filled with excitement, anticipation and expectation.

The Wise Men from the east came seeking. They weren't sure exactly what they were seeking, just like so many of us. They came seeking the answers to life and the meaning of life.

Maybe they were like us. They found that all the stuff money could buy just wasn't enough. They came to the realization that there wasn't enough stuff in the whole world to fill what they were looking for. So, they went seeking among the stars and in philosophy. And that search led them to Bethlehem, and they found what they were looking for.

But once they found what they were looking for God wouldn't let them return the same way they came. God warned them and sent them off on their way back home by "Another Road"

Let me tell you about another wise man, a wise man of our day, who like the wise men of old, was led by the stars and then lead home by Another Road. From a young age, Hugh Ross was consumed by the study of physics and astronomy. He devoured scientific texts and found in them a knowledge that excited him. His studies of science

and the order of the universe led Hugh to the belief that there had to be a Creator somewhere that set the whole thing in motion.

As a young man, he began studying the texts of the world's major religions. He measured each one against the known facts of science and history. If there was a Creator, Hugh felt, and if this Creator went to such great lengths to make an orderly universe that could be understood, then such a Creator would want to communicate with creation in an orderly and truthful manner. Hugh Ross' study of the stars and the planets led him to believe that there was such a God. Hugh Ross found that God in the Bible.

But it would be another few months of wrestling with his will before Hugh was ready to humble himself and ask God into his life. Today, Dr. Hugh Ross has earned degrees in physics and astronomy from the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto. He is the director of Reasons to Believe, an organization that publicizes the historical and scientific truths of the Bible. Dr. Ross comments, "As an astronomer, I have achieved my ultimate quest: My education led me to the stars; my faith led me beyond."

Dr. Ross searched for knowledge; what he found was Truth and it sent him home by Another Road.

This morning we're invited to come to the manger once again with the Wise Men. But like the Wise Men we're invited to go home by Another Road. This morning we're invited to come to Bethlehem, "the house of bread" and to leave by Another Road.

This morning we're not only offering bread and wine for the journey but oil for healing.

I don't know what might be troubling your heart. I don't know what you've come seeking this morning. But know this, God is in this place and God will meet you where you are. And God offers what you are seeking.

So come this morning to the Table. Make that journey of faith like the Wise Men. But then listen to God as God leads you home on Another Road. Leave what is troubling you behind.

Leave the illness that eats at both your heart and your body. Leave the hurt and the pain caused by others.

Leave the guilt of your sin. Leave all that behind and leave by Another Road, the Road of forgiveness. The Road of Healing. You came by one road seeking something this morning.

Listen to God, be fed by God, be touched by God. Start the new year on a new journey and leave by Another Road.