

The Epiphany Year B
Matthew 2:1-12
January 7, 2018
St. George's Episcopal Church
Fr. Chris

“Seek and Ye Shall Find”

“When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.”

What are you looking for? Are you searching for something more in this life?

Do you look up at the night sky very often and gaze upon this wonder of millions of stars twinkling in the dark night sky? Or is most of your life lived under and below this light show, which is just another of the many awesome wonders competing for our attention? I admit that it is a rare night when I look up at it, maybe using my light-polluted sky in the city as an excuse. When I gaze out my windows at night, the lights I see are the pinholes of windows in skyscrapers in the near distance, instead of stars, and for me, the bright twinkle I notice is likely a building topper or an LCD billboard by the highway. I am still drawn to look. What am I searching for? I am not studying the night sky the same way the main characters of today's Gospel passage from St. Matthew were doing. But I am curious about the bustling world of both man and nature surrounding me.

These three wise individuals were searching the sky, and when they saw something wonderful, but they did not understand, they searched for answers, and their search led them to God.

A new star appeared: bright, nearby, and in the East. There was no electricity and not much light pollution back then, in their world, or in the night sky. It was clear, and when you looked up you could see millions of lights dotting the sky on a clear night. One of these stood out from the others. It was what came to be known as the star of Bethlehem.

Now, you had to be looking up into the sky to notice this astronomical moment. And these three individuals were doing so. Mankind has always been interested in the stars shining at night, wondering sometimes if these stars impact our life back here on the earth. Most would look with disdain upon the so-called pseudo-science of astrology, yet the predictions associated with astrological signs are among the most popular features of the newspaper and the Internet. “I am a Libra” becomes a point of introduction in relaxed social settings, as though it explains who I am, and who might be a suitable mate or friend for me, or that it will dictate my fortunes and finances. Many hope that the stars will help us discern a path through our own lives. Yet Jesus is the star, the true light that does this.

As they gazed upon the astronomical display that season, the wise men could even have wondered if the stars were lights coming to us from heaven, and so the term, “heaven above” was fashioned. Gazing up at this wonderful, awe-inspiring lightshow lifted your mind from the things of this earth to the mysteries beyond it, and the wonder of this immense creation in which we live. It is humbling when you consider it. It inspires humility, as you realize you are but a speck of sand in this wide universe in which we live.

And yet, even as a tiny speck, you matter to God. As infinite as the universe is, so is God’s love for you! And that is difficult to wrap your mind around as you gaze up at the stars. But as you contemplate the stars in the night sky, should you receive a good chance to look up and see them, they inspire an odd closeness which is almost intense, to this immense being who is God, right in front of you.

So these men were searching for something special, no, even more than that, someone special in their journey to discover the meaning of this star they had seen.

Think about the awe-inspiring events in the sky experienced recently. Last year there was a full solar eclipse that traveled right across the continental United States. Many traveled miles to witness this once in a lifetime event. Seeing is believing, and first hand experience is more moving than a video of the event after the fact. This astronomical event was something not to be missed. I remember the eerie mid-afternoon light that day, and passing by the Manchester green I noticed hundreds had gathered with their equipment, and unique card-board and plastic sunglasses and lawn chairs to view it.

And again, many travel miles to witness the show of fireworks cast up upon the night sky. Some of the people where I live, even though they have a great view of the fireworks in downtown Hartford, chose to stay inside and watch a crystal ball drop in Time’s Square some two hours or more away from here. The display was there in Hartford for all to see. Some slept through it. Some avoided it due to the cold conditions. Many didn’t care or simply forgot to look up. We miss so much of our lives this way. Did you see the fireworks last night? I asked a few of my own neighbors in the lobby of my urban building. A few were disappointed they had missed it. Some just brushed it off: “I’ll see them next year when it is warmer.”

There was also the bright orange full moon this past week. How many saw that? It is speculated that this is an optical illusion, but this was also a time when the moon is closer to earth in its orbit than almost any other. It was large, and meteorologists say that it had an effect on our weather, perhaps ushering in the cold snap we have been enduring. I did see it one night coming home, and again the next morning. I actually read about it in the paper and on line. I searched. But I could know more. It is a scientific mystery still pondered by many.

Waiting for a bus or a train to appear in the distance is kind of like waiting upon a star to appear. Every time you look the background is the same in the distance, until you hear the distant sound of the train whistle braying over the countryside. And then the long awaited train arrives. There is relief. If you are waiting to leave, that’s one thing, but if you are in a station waiting to meet a loved one, it’s another. Seeing stars is like the later. Waiting for an astrological marker for the arrival of God is unique. It is intensely gratifying. Imagine the feelings of the Wisemen when they ended their journey in Bethlehem.

The point is, 'seek and you shall find!' These are the words of Jesus himself. But you have to be looking, and more than that, searching for God in our midst. If you are searching, if you are seeking something more than what you have had in the past, look no further. It is right in front of you. Lift your sights into the sky and see the wonder of the Lord.

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

AMEN