

Searching For the Saviour

Matthew 2:1-6

Intro

They say that the most sought after toy this 2017 Christmas season is Nerf Nitro Longshot Smash and in second place is Star Wars: BB-8 from LEGO.

Nerf Nitro Longshot Smash is going for about \$24 and the Star Wars: BB-8 is about \$110.

One hundred years ago in 1917 the most sought out gift for kids was food – candy, nuts and oranges, and a teddy bear. Interesting how times have changed. At this time of the year many people are seeking out the right gift to buy their loved one or ones.

But also at the same time, there's another search going on that's far greater. *Newsweek* had an issue some time ago called "*The Search for the Sacred: Quest for Spiritual Meaning.*"

With all the materialism and the uncertainty of the future, people are looking around and are wondering: "Who can give me the answers to the basic questions of life? The spiritual questions like, "Why am I here? Where am I going? Where did I come from? What is the meaning of life? Is there a purpose in life? Is there a God? If there is a God - does He care about me? How can I know Him?" Those kinds of questions are being asked by millions of people.

Original Seekers

If you are a spiritual seeker here today, I want to say you're in good company. You have a lot in common with a group of people who were searching for meaning at the very first Christmas – the wise men or magi. They were seekers, searching for truth, searching for a Saviour.

I've always been fascinated by the wise men when I was a kid. Whenever there was a Christmas play, I always wanted to be one of the wise men. I never wanted to be one of those poor shepherds. Shepherds, what did they get to wear? A bathrobe and a towel on their head. I wanted to be a wise man, because they always got to wear the crowns, the jewels, and the flashy robes.

The Bible doesn't tell us a lot about the wise men. It doesn't give us a lot of details about who they really were. Magi is a term for a person who is kind of a combination astronomer, scientist, and philosopher. They were very wise men. They were well educated and they were also very wealthy.

We don't even know how many of the wise men there were. We've always thought there were 3 wise men but the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says that there were 3 gifts the magi brought. What we do know about the magi is what they did. The wise men did 3 things that caused them to seek and find God.

If you're a seeker today, if you say, "I'm genuinely searching for the truth in life. If there is a God I want to know Him," then if you will do the three things the wise men did, you'll find God too.

1. They Sought the Truth

If you want to find God today, you've got to seek the truth. Go after it. Become a seeker. Take it serious.

There's a big difference between seekers and speculators. There are far more speculators in the world than there are seekers. Speculators are people who say, "Well, I think God is like... My idea of God is like.... I imagine God to be...." Who cares? Who set you up to be an authority? Just because you think something it doesn't make it true. There's a difference between a speculator and a seeker.

Speculators just guess, they conjecture, and your guess is as good as any other person's in what God is like.

But seekers are people who diligently search for the truth, they search for answers. They don't just make assumptions. They take the time and effort to find the truth. They follow the evident where it leads.

That's what happened with Josh McDowell, well known writer, apologist and conference speaker. As a young man, he considered himself an agnostic and believed that Christianity was worthless. After being challenged to intellectually examine the claims of Christianity, Josh discovered compelling and overwhelming evidence for the reliability of the Christian faith. After believing in Jesus Christ, Josh's life changed dramatically as he experienced the power of God's love. He has published many books in the area of apologetics, where he defends the faith.

That's what the wise men did, they searched and followed where the evidence lead. We read in Matthew 2:1-2, "*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*

In these verses we can see 3 things that genuine seekers do.

1/ First, genuine seekers watch what's happening in the world. They're alert, observant. They saw a star that was different in the sky. They were alert to it.

2/ Second, genuine seekers ask questions. They said, "What do you think this means?" and they started asking around. "What does this sign mean?" "Where is it pointing to?"

3/ Third, they do whatever it took to find the answer. If you're a genuine seeker, I encourage you to do that. Do whatever it takes to find out the truth about, "Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" "Is there a God?" "Does He care?"

It's ironic to me that when Jesus was born, the religious center of the universe, Jerusalem was just 8 kilometers away from where Jesus was born in Bethlehem. All of the religious scholars in the world at that time were concentrated in Jerusalem. They were only 8 kilometers away from Jesus' birth. But not one religious leader went 8 kilometers to search for Jesus.

In contrast to those religious leaders, these wise men probably took about a few months to get there. That revealed a serious commitment to searching for the truth. The problem with many people today is that all want to know the truth but don't want to take the time to find it. They want to know God but don't want to take the time to find out about Him.

Some people say, "I want to know the truth, but I'm too busy to search for the answers." To me that's a tragedy. The most tragic thing in life is to go all through life never figuring out why am I here. Never figuring out what is the reason, what is the meaning of life? That is a wasted life.

God created you with a spiritual vacuum that nothing else can fill. Not money, not fame, not pleasure, not having all kind of things. Only God can fill that God-shaped emptiness. And that's really what you're searching for.

The good news is this. God wants you to get to know Him. He wants you and He's interested in you. He wants to have a relationship with you. So notice what He promises in Jeremiah 29:13 "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" That's a great promise. That's the Good News. He wants you to know Him.

2. They Experienced Joy

We read in Matthew 2:10 *“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.”* The original word there literally means they jumped up and down with joy. They were joyful beyond belief.

Enjoy the fact that God has already taken the first step, wanting you to come to know Him. God wants to help you get to know Him. So He may give you a sign and He does this for any genuine seeker.

In the magi’s case, their sign was a very special star. A lot of people say that maybe the star they were following was some comet or supernova or asteroid. But there’s no star that ever preformed like this star. The Bible says it led them from the east directly to Jerusalem. Then it turned and went south to Bethlehem (Matt. 2:9-10). Then it settled right over the home where Jesus, Mary and Joseph were. Amazing! No star does that! Look at Matt. 2:9-10, *“After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.”*¹⁰ *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.”* That was God’s GPS!

Throughout history God has used different kinds of instruments and signs to get people’s attention. Whether it was opening the Red Sea, bring down manna from heaven, a pillar of fire by night or cloud by day. God often uses different kinds of signs.

Chances are you have a star in your life but you haven’t recognized it. That star may be a book you’ve read or a person you know or an experience you’ve had or a movie you watched or perhaps a dream you had. It may be some event. It may be a church service or event. I have no doubt that God has brought people across your path in order to be a travel guide to bring you to God. It may be a believing parent or a believing wife or husband or friend or somebody at work or even a little child. But God does not leave genuine seekers without a travel guide or some form of light to guide you. So what’s the star in your life?

If you’re a believer, I want you to thank God for the stars in your life this Christmas season. The travel guides, the clues. They may be people or they may be events. But thank God for the people or events that led you to Christ. And rejoice for those people. Daniel 12:3 says that those who lead people are like stars, *“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”* Wow!

Some of you have had a difficult year. You’ve had marriage problems. Perhaps you’ve had problems with your children, problems with your health. Maybe you’ve had financial difficulties or maybe goals and dreams you’ve wanted just didn’t fit together, and you’ve been stressed. Have you considered that the difficulties might be a star? Maybe God is trying to get your attention.

At Christmas time, I have some really good news for you. Luke 2:10, the angels said at Christmas, *“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”* Why is Christmas such good news? Because of what Christ came to do – He came to be our Saviour.

You hear the word “salvation” and you hear people say, “I’m saved.” What does that mean anyway? Saved from what? What does it mean to be saved? What does it mean to have Christ as your Saviour? It means this:

Christ wants to give you forgiveness for everything you’ve ever done wrong in your past - your sins. He wants to give you a purpose and strength to live. He wants to give you the security of knowing your home in heaven is there for you when you die.

You're never going to get a better Christmas gift than that. Forgiveness for your past, help in the present, and security for your future. That's called salvation. That's the good news. But you need to come to Him and ask for forgiveness and repent, turn away from sin and wrong doing.

You need to seek the truth and then you need to experience the joy and realize that God has a gift for you. This Christmas, God invites you to not only seek the truth but experience the joy. If you want to find God at Christmas, you have to do three things: Seek the truth, Experience the joy and:

3. Recognize the Gift

Recognize who this baby really was. The Bible says He was no mere baby. He was God. God came to earth in human form so we could get to know Him. You can't recognize God very well just in nature. If Jesus had not come to earth, you and I would not know that God is love and personal, that God has a plan and purpose for your life. God came to earth in human form so nobody would be afraid of Him, because nobody's afraid of a baby.

Colossians 1:15-16 *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."* That baby made you! That's the amazing thing about Christmas, that God would so humble Himself and descended to human beings and become one of us and put Himself in the hands of normal human beings as an innocent, helpless little child. You've got to recognize the gift.

Why do we give gifts at Christmas? Because it was God's idea. He started the whole thing anyway. He gave the first Christmas gift. The Bible says, *"For God so loved the world He gave..."* He gave His only Son (John 3:16). He took the initiative. God gives us His Christmas gift.

You must recognize the gift. But also you've got to receive the gift. There are people who celebrate Christmas every year. They put up lights. They put up a tree. They sing the Christmas carols. They go to church. They do all those things at Christmas but they've never received the gift. Some of you recognize the gift. "I believe Jesus is who He said He is. I believe He was and is God." Open your life and invite Him into your life. Receive Him.

How do we know that the wise men recognized the gift? How do we know that they really realized that they were worshiping God? We know because of the way they reacted when they saw the baby and we know because of the presents that they gave the baby. The Bible says in Matthew 2:11 *"When the magi, the wise men, went into the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary and they bowed down and they worshipped Him."*

I don't know when the last time was that you bowed down and worshipped a baby, but this was no ordinary baby. We know that they recognized Him as God because they were filled with awe. And the Bible says they fell on their knees and worshipped Jesus. It's interesting to me that when they went into that house; they didn't worship the star; they didn't worship Joseph and they didn't worship Mary. They bowed down before the baby, because Jesus is the only one worthy of worship and adoration. He is the only Saviour of the world and He is our Saviour.

Conclusion

So this Christmas, I invite you to recognize the gift; who Jesus really was and is. And then receive God's gift, receive His Son into your life and heart and let Him fill you with His love. Recognize and receive the gift. The wise men did. And you'll be wise too when you do it.

Each of us came here today for a different reason. Some of you came just because it's a habit because it's Christmas time or maybe you came because a relative or friend invited you.

That person is your star. God wants to use that relative or friend to lead you to know Him and His love for you. But regardless of the reason you think you're here, you're not here by accident. Long, long ago before you even were born, God knew that you would be here so He could get you to be quiet long enough and He could say to you, "I love you so much. You matter to Me. I made you for a purpose. I've seen every moment of your life. I saw when you were being formed in your mother's womb. I've never missed a heartbeat that you've had.

And I know your sadness and your sorrows but I love you. That's what God says to you today. I am confident that just as God led the original seekers, the wise men, to Bethlehem, that He's led you to come and know Him as your Saviour.