

Jan 4 – Bible Story – Epiphany (Matthew 2:1-12)

Movie – Atlantis

Theme – “For what are you searching?”

Today we begin our sermon series “Reel Parables.” We will be looking in our Bible stories in relationship to Disney and Pixar movies. Our first movie, the one for today, is Atlantis.

Opening Weekend, June 15, 2001, it grossed \$329,011. But due to the film's poorer-than-expected box-office performance, Disney quietly canceled both a spin-off television series and an underwater attraction at its Disneyland theme park. *Atlantis* was nominated for a number of awards, including seven Annie Awards, and won Best Sound Editing at the 2002 Golden Reel Awards. So who has seen this movie?

For those of you who have not seen this movie... Set in 1914, young linguist orphan named Milo Thatch buries himself in books trying to unlock the secret to the destruction of Atlantis. Although his theories are ridiculed by his colleagues he is persistent in his dreams of one day discovering the lost isle. His dreams are realized when he is given a spot in an expedition, financed by a friend of his grandfather, to go in search of Atlantis following Milo's guide: The Shepard's Journal. But the Guardians of Atlantis await the explorers putting them in danger at every turn. And the deadly truth about Atlantis's demise puts Milo, the royal family, and all of Atlantis in mortal jeopardy.

Now let us watch a clip.

Today is Epiphany Sunday. This is the day that we celebrate the arrival of the wise men. Epiphany in Koine Greek literally means Manifestation or striking appearance. It is also called the Day of Lights. This is the day that we celebrate the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus. In scholarly terms, it is the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ. This is also the end of the 12 days of Christmas.

The Readers' Digest once asked this question: Have you ever imagined what would have happened if there had been three wise women instead of three wise men at the Epiphany? They suggested that if there had been three wise women:

1. They would have asked for directions to the stable locally instead of going to King Herod.
2. They would have arrived on time and helped deliver the baby.

3. They would have cleaned the stable and brought practical for the family to eat – like a casserole.
4. And there would have been peace on earth!”

Almost every Christmas season we sing the song, “We Three Kings.” This song tells one of the intriguing events of the Christmas Story, the arrival of the Wise Men. But much of what have seen portrayed about the Wise Men comes from writings and legends generations later and is not written in the Bible.

Let’s look more closely at these wise men. According to Matthew (the only Gospel to speak of them), they came “from the East” to worship the “king of the Jews.” The phrase “from the East” more literally means *from the rising of the sun*. Traditionally the view developed that they were from Babylonia, Persia, or Yemen. Which is now in either Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia or the Yemen.

Although the popular Christmas hymn and traditions tell us that three wise men visited Christ, the Bible does not give us the number of wise men. The traditional view that three wise men journeyed to see Christ is likely based on the fact that three gifts were given, that of gold, frankincense and myrrh. How ever many wise men there were, they probably would have had many more servants with them. Some of you may know what names they are traditionally given. Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar- which was formally adopted in the 6th century.

Mathew 2:1 begins by telling us that wise men (or magi depending on the version) came. So what should we call them? Wise men? Magi? Kings?

King James, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and New Living (pew Bibles) translations translates the Greek word to “wise men”. The NIV (New International Version) translates the Greek word to Magi. The word Magi comes from the Greek word 'magos' (where the English word 'magic' comes from). Priests of a religious group that became Zoroastrianism. This particular religious group paid particular attention to the stars and gained an international reputation for astrology, which was at the time highly regarded as a science. Magic comes from the Greek word for Magi.

No translation translates the Greek word into king. That they were kings came from a later tradition. One theory was that they were Kings of Yemen, as during this time the Kings of Yemen were Jews. Another reason that later traditions said that they were kings was because the Old Testament predicted that kings would come.

So no matter how many came or what they were called, they were searching. In their searching, they followed a star. Tradition tells us that they had seen an unusual new star in the sky, and knew that it told of the birth of a special king. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, and there are many theories including comets, supernovas, conjunctions of planets, or something supernatural! Either way, they were searching and followed a star to find what they were searching for.

Milo Thatch, in our movie today, was also searching. He was searching for the lost city of Atlantis. Instead of a star, Milo follows The Shepard's Journal. It is a difficult journey. The expedition takes them to the waters off the coast of Iceland, where a giant submarine takes them to the ocean floor. They must battle the Leviathan that ends up destroying the sub. After braving several pitfalls and strange creatures, they finally make it to Atlantis.

The wise men also had a difficult journey. This journey of 500 to 1000 miles by camel was not for the faint of heart. It would have been a long, grueling and perilous journey. It would also have been quite costly. They would have to really believe in what they are doing to keep it up week after week.

Just like Milo. Year after year he tried to get people on board for the search. But his theories are ridiculed by his colleagues.

And can you imagine what the wise men's friends and neighbors thought?

"So, you're going on a journey huh?" "Yes."

"Where are you going?" "We don't know for sure."

"How far is it?" "Well we don't know that either."

"How long are you going to be gone and who is financing this adventure?"

"We don't know for sure and we are paying our own way"

"Well, if you ask me, it sounds more like mission impossible"

Milo was searching.

The wise men were searching.

They sought him in spite of the difficulties of the journey.

They sought him in spite of the disinterest of others.

Are we searching?

For what are we searching?

Wealth? Power? Family? Security? Christ?

But don't be surprised that just as the Magi's journey was taken at great cost, for us to follow Jesus will have a cost. And so they were willing to risk everything to find Him.

They were willing to leave everything they knew, to risk it all, to seek a King.

The wise men left their homes, their families and at great expense traveled hundreds of miles to follow a star to search for the Christ Child. They really wanted to come and worship Jesus.

The wise men... and Milo... searched with hope and expectation. We too should search with hope!

The question is:

What are we willing to give Him?

Are we willing to give Him our best?

Would we be willing to go on a lengthy journey, without knowing where we were going or when we would arrive, to worship Him?

Are we willing to give up our comfort zone to follow Christ?

Are we willing to ridicule because of our faith?

Christmas may be over, but like the wise men, we should always be seeking/searching for the Christ child... with hope... with expectation.

Remember, with the wise men... and Milo...

they sought Him, when others didn't

they found Him, when others couldn't

they received Him when others wouldn't.

For what are you searching? Are you searching for Christ?