

Right God, Wrong Place

Matthew 2:1-2,11-12

The Christmas story, the way we tell it is a bit misleading in a way. We seem to bunch all the events into one story line as if it all transpired at one time. First of all, the Bible doesn't say how many Wisemen there were. There were three gifts, but there may have been more Wisemen in the group. The Wisemen were also late to the party. Scripture says they found Jesus in a house, not a manger. And there are hints in the text that Jesus was at least 1 ½ or 2 years old by this time.

Some scholars believe the Wisemen traveled about 1000 miles by the time they got to Jerusalem and it may have taken them 2 to 3 months just to prepare for the journey. They probably traveled in a large caravan that may have numbered up to 300 people.

So you can just imagine the sight of this caravan as they pull up to the gates of Jerusalem as they announce, "We have come to worship the new born King of the Jews."

They may have gone there to ask where the child was but God apparently had another purpose in mind. Stay with me while I unfold the story this morning.

See, up until this time Jerusalem has been out of the loop about the birth of Jesus. It's been around 2 years since Jesus was born, and God had sent NO ONE to Jerusalem. Well, I should say no one.

Remember who God sent the angels to when Jesus was first born? The shepherds. Luke 2 tells us "When the shepherds had seen Jesus, they

spread the word concerning what had been told them about the child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”

They went everywhere telling anyone who would listen.

Keep this in mind, Jerusalem was a great progressive city and capital of Israel. This is where the King and the priests and the scribes and the Pharisees lived. When they heard that angels had appeared to mere shepherds they had a good laugh and went back to living their lives. The very thought that God would send angels to common workmen, but not to the politicians and religious leaders of Israel was ridiculous!! Why would He do it that way? I said it last week, that is just the way God does things. Remember 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”

Did you know for centuries churches have believed they had to impress people to bring them to Christ? We still do today. We build beautiful churches to impress and attract and it works, for a while.

They courted the rich and the famous because they believed that the more successful they appeared the more money and members they could attract because it DOES WORK, for a while.

The thing is, that’s not how God builds His church!!! God is more impressed with shepherds in the field than Kings in the palace. Have you ever heard the old saying, “If you win them with bells and whistles you will have to keep them with bells and whistles?”

God wants us focused on His message, and His message is, Christ and Him crucified! The hope of our salvation!! Jesus is our message!!!!!! If our church gets wrapped up in trying to impress people, they can end up taking folks' off the message and putting on the messenger. That's why my first act as your pastor was to remove the for sale sign out of the front yard. My thought is, if God can build His church hid away in an industrial park then He can do it anywhere!!

God isn't out to impress anyone. Notice the difference in responses: The angels go to shepherds and what do they do? They leave their sheep and go worship baby Jesus. The Wisemen go to Jerusalem and does anybody go with them to worship baby Jesus? NO!! And God knew they wouldn't.

Notice what happened when the Wisemen showed up, Matthew 2:3 "When King Herod heard about the birth of Jesus he was disturbed, along with all of Jerusalem with him." God was putting Jerusalem on notice.

Once Jesus started His ministry, Jerusalem was His focus. Jesus' ministry and the church's destiny were tied to Jerusalem. Jesus died in Jerusalem. As the church grew, the Apostles headquartered themselves in Jerusalem. The Passover and Pentecost all took place there. In fact, Jerusalem was the center of everything God had in mind for His people. Jesus had no intention of just giving up on Jerusalem!!!

So what can we learn from all of this? First we can learn that God presents His message to everyone. He sends it first to those who will eagerly receive it, but He also sends it to those He knows will reject it. He did it for us, why wouldn't He do it for others as well?

The second thing is, God didn't try to impress people. Remember, "what you catch them with is what you will have to keep them with." His message is clear, "Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus, Acts 4:12 For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

People will not be saved with pretty buildings. They will not leave their sins because they sit in padded chairs. People will only be transformed when they come and kneel before the Savior.

This is our message!!! We serve a Jesus who humbled himself. A Jesus who became the son of man so that we could become sons of God.
That is who He is and what He has done!!