

“What is YOUR Quest?”

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Graphic: GPS, searching, binoculars

Key Verse: 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Ask them to: Live out the mission that was started by the Magi...seek Jesus for yourself.

1) Introduction

- a) Welcome to 2008! Whenever we switch over to a new year, it's always great to reflect a little on the past year and look forward to the new one.
- b) One of the things that we sometimes do is take stock of where we have been and what we have accomplished as individuals and as families.
- c) We celebrate the accomplishments and learn from the times when we didn't quite meet our goals...
- d) For the Taylor family, one of the goals we set for 2007 was to find 50 geocaches. Now, geocaching is an adventure sport for which you use a hand-held global positioning system to find hidden caches, or stashes, that are placed all over the globe. We even attempted to find some this year in Mexico but ran out of time. We've found geocaches in several states and are slowly working our total toward 100.
- e) I often wonder if searching for the geocaches is the exciting part, or if finding them is the best part. Some of the locations are just beautiful, and other locations (we found one once at a Starbucks parking lot) are not so beautiful.
- f) Once you find the cache, however, you sign your name and if it's big enough, you can trade trinkets in the cache. And that's all...
- g) Unfortunately, in 2007, we didn't quite meet our goal of 50 caches. But that doesn't mean we didn't enjoy the sport or that we didn't find things we were excited to find...
- h) It simply means that we'll have to continue our quest.

2) The quest

- a) So what is **your** quest?
- b) There are some others who are geocachers here. Is that your quest? Is it golf or climbing mountains or playing an instrument?
- c) Is it being a better mother or father? The best grandparent?
- d) Maybe you made a New Year's resolution that focuses on your quest?
- e) As Christians sitting here in Little Valley, NY, what should be our quest?
- f) Webster's defines quest in the noun form as *an act or instance of seeking*. In the verb form it means: *to search a trail or go on a quest*.
- g) And so this word *quest* does not point to an end result, but the journey it takes to get there.
- h) In this morning's familiar story about the Magi coming from the East after Jesus was born, there is a quest happening here...they are undertaking the act of seeking...they are searching a trail...and they aren't exactly sure where the quest is leading.
- i) But they are curiously faithful to follow a star, to use their expertise and go on this quest.
- j) This reading is more than an object lesson about being faithful...this is a story about God using people and places and circumstances that have nothing to do with God to point directly to Himself.
- k) READ Matthew 2:1-12**
- l) We've heard this story read many times...we've enacted it in children's dramas and seen it on TV. But has it ever really occurred to us who these Magi were, why they would go on this amazing quest to find a baby who they didn't even know, and risk their lives to rebel against the political power in a system of which they were not even a part? Why this quest?
- m) Let me give us some background here:
 - i) These Magi, or astrologers, were probably from Babylon. And contrary to popular belief, there were probably not three, although we don't know how many. And most likely, they showed up 1-2 years after Jesus was born.

- ii) They were most likely not Jewish, but because at **one** point, there were Jews in exile in that area, they may have been exposed somehow to the prophecies they recite to King Herod.
- iii) Because they were astrologers, they spent time studying the skies, charting the stars, thinking about UFOs and the like.
- iv) They noticed that a star had appeared in the western sky, over a spot hundred of miles away from them. And, I think, out of curiosity and because they had heard about this prophecy, they made this quest to find out more. And logically they went to Jerusalem, the largest city in the area.
- v) And because they were trying to find out more, they naively ask the reigning king, Herod, where the NEW king was...the one that the prophecy told about.
- vi) Now, if I'm the king and somebody from some other place came to me and asked me about the new king, I might get a little jealous. And that's exactly what happened. Yet, because Herod was shrewd, he made it seem like he wanted to know where this new king was so he could worship him as well, but really it was only so he could crush this perceived threat.
- vii) But the Magi, again naively, said, OK...we'll get back to you when this quest is over.
- n) And they went and they found the baby and they worshiped him. Mary was there, I presume Joseph was there. Jesus was a toddler at this point, running around and hiding behind his mother when these strangers show up.
- o) Mary allows them to worship this new king and present them with gifts, really expensive gifts, for the family. Mary still treasured the words of the angel in her heart and knew that these types of occurrences would happen to them.
- p) And, as miraculously as the Magi found the baby, they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and they went home by a different route.
- q) These scientists...on a quest to find this star...using the tools and the gifts that God had given them...came to see Jesus and his mother...and they worshipped him and give him expensive gifts.

- r) Gifts that I believe were necessary for Mary and Joseph and Jesus to use to escape to Egypt because Herod, in the next chapter, orders all 2-year-old and younger boys to be killed.

3) **YOUR** quest

- a) When they started their quest, the Magi were not exactly sure what they would find. They knew that they were curious. They knew that something strange was going on in the skies, which were their passion. They knew that they had heard of a prophecy of a new king. And so they went on this quest.
- b) In many ways, Matthew's account of this story is way more than a narrative of this journey of the Magi. Matthew knew something that the Magi didn't know when they started their quest.
- c) He knew that Jesus is God's revelation to the whole world! (repeat)
- d) Matthew is telling us that these pagan astrologers from a pagan country were used by God to fulfill God's plan of helping the whole world understand the revelation from God.
- e) Through unbiblical and even anti-biblical means, these Magi undertook this risky and naïve quest to seek the Messiah, about whom they know very little.
- f) But they were obedient...they followed the star and what they knew about the scriptures...and they offered gifts. And as they did, they learned the truth about God's plan for the world.
- g) You see, in this part of Matthew's gospel, the mission that will be to all the nations is anticipated here and completed at the end of the gospel when Jesus himself calls the disciples to go into all the world and share the Good News.
- h) We have to realize that this is God's plan, not Matthew's plan, not my plan, not your plan...but God's plan.
- i) And God will use whatever means He wants to carry out his plan.
- j) Your quest, should you choose to accept it, is not so much unlike the one upon which the Magi embarked centuries ago.
- k) We are called to use our gifts, be obedient, follow the signs and the scriptures, and offer gifts to Jesus. And if we do, those who come after us will see that we were faithful and understood God's plan.

4) Conclusion

- a) As we look forward to 2008, as I mentioned in our Church Conference this past Thursday, we have an opportunity to be faithful to God and the church, to work on being more open and loving to those who come to worship and be in ministry, and to be intentional about learning all we can about Jesus and each other.
- b) The quest on which you embarked when you became a baptized Christian continues to this day, if you are faithful.
- c) Jesus is still God's revelation for the whole world, including yours. And we have an opportunity to tell other people what it means to be living the Christian life.
- d) We'll be talking about how to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, through reading his Words, spending time in prayer, and holding each other accountable.
- e) We'll be talking a great deal about the beliefs of the church, the historic and foundational beliefs that root us strongly to the apostolic church and to the Methodist movement.
- f) We'll be continuing to bear fruit in ministry and grow our branches to reach out to even more people who are in desperate need to finding Jesus and accepting Him as their Lord and Savior.
- g) And we'll be continuing to overflow with thanksgiving for Jesus, for Holy Communion, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for God's provision in our lives, and for the church.
- h) This quest on which we find ourselves is the quest of a lifetime. This is the ultimate adventure sport...living the Christian life faithfully.
- i) The future is bright...the New Year holds the hope of humanity...that Jesus will return to usher in the completion of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. Until that reality comes, may we be found faithfully seeking after the star of Bethlehem, may we be found obedient to the Lord and offering gifts...may we be on a Spirit-led quest of holiness and service that leads right to Jesus...and may others go with us together.
- j) Let's pray...