

Saturday "Sermon"

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Following the Star(s)

You may know that the Wise Men didn't actually find Jesus until He was nearly two years old, and that the celebration of Epiphany on January 6 commemorates that meeting. But even if the Wise Men weren't really present at the manger, this is the season when we think about them most often.

I've been thinking about the Wise Men this week, and I've been wondering about what was going on in their minds when they loaded their camels and headed off toward Jerusalem from what we know as Iran. How did they decide that what they saw in the heavens was a message from God? And what made them willing to take the risks involved in following that star?

I've also been wondering about Mary and Joseph, and about their conversations with the angels who announced both the coming of the Messiah and the parts they were to play in His story. Almost certainly a teen-ager at the time, Mary was quietly minding her own business when an angel showed up to say, "You're never going to believe this, but by this time tomorrow, you're going to be pregnant, and God is going to do some amazing stuff through you" (Luke 1:28-33). We know how that story turned out, and it was pretty amazing.

While I've been thinking, I've remembered Abraham and Sarah, that faithful couple from whom three of the world's great faiths are descended. Abraham was already seventy-five years old when God said to him, "*Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you*" (Genesis 12:1).

I can almost hear Abraham responding, "Yeah, right. Listen to me. I'm retired. Sarah and I are comfortably settled in this community, and you want me to pack up my stuff and leave my grandchildren!?! Worse than that, you're not even going to tell me where you want me to go? You just want me to head south and see what happens? *You must be crazy!*" But that's exactly what Abraham did.

What made those all these folk willing to take the huge risks involved in agreeing to go where God was leading them? What made them willing to follow the "stars" God gave them to guide their way? Perhaps more importantly this December, what would it take for you to hear and to follow what God is leading you to do . . . today?

God's message to us today is two-fold. God's first message is, "*I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*" (Jeremiah 29:11). And God's second message is the key to the first: "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:13).

When we remember the Wise Men, we sometimes use the phrase, "Wise Men [people] still seek Him." Don't evaluate your present circumstances based on what you can see right now. Base your hope on the eternal promises of God . . . and keep your eyes and ears open as we make our way toward CHRISTmas!