

Matthew 2:1-12

Pursuing the Promise

We are often guilty of demanding that God provide all of the answers to all of our questions before we will set one foot, or lift one finger to follow what He calls us to do. We must "know" but the reality is that we can never know everything we think we need to know. We can know what God calls us to do right now and no more. We might have hints and ideas about what might lie ahead, but the shape of the fulfillment rarely fits the dimensions of our expectations. In this last sermon for this Christmas series about our relationship to the promises of God I want to think with you about the pursuit of the promise, about what it means to believe God and follow what He has shown you, about what it might cost you, and about what we gain in exchange. For pursuing the promises of God might cost you, in fact it probably WILL, but the cost will always be utterly eclipsed by the stunning wonder of the fulfillment, revealed in its proper time and place.

I. THE WISE MEN'S PURSUIT

a. Took a long time

- i. Travelled far
- ii. Travelled long
- iii. Travelled at great risk
- iv. Travelled at great cost

b. Began when the star appeared - @ the birth of Jesus

i. Not present at the manger

1. "after Jesus was born"
2. "has been born"
3. Herod sought to know when the star had appeared, determined that the child was a toddler. Herod was an Edomite, and was thus himself appointed by Rome and a fulfillment of prophecy –

Genesis 49.10

4. Probably the actual date would be somewhere between 7 and 5 BC, the

Gregorian monk who originally created the calendar in use today was wrong by a little bit...

5. Paidion - young child --> brephos - babe, infant
 6. Found the house where the young child was
 7. Herod knew the age of the child and sought to kill all who were under 2
- ii. They were not kings, but wise men, astrologers, magicians, academics
- iii. Probably came from Babylon, or Persia. They would have had access to Jewish writings because of the captivity of the Jews during the Babylonian exile.
- Daniel 1.4; 2.28**
- iv. Don't know how many there were - three is the tradition, but that is taken only from the presence of 3 gifts.

- v. The gifts are symbolic, but the real wonder is the willingness to give them
 - 1. Gold for a king
 - 2. Frankincense for a god
 - 3. Myrrh a preparation for death
 - 4. They had already given in time and cost
 - 5. They brought kingly gifts, of tremendous value.
 - 6. God used them to provide for the needs of His Son

II. UNKNOWN PURSUIT

Did not know where they were going, how long it would take, what they would find.

- a. Without real answers, but with knowing where to find what they needed
- b. Without complete understanding, but possessing faith that what they sought was there

- c. Without the whole picture, but with obedience to go and see
- d. Without being a part of this God and His people, but with respect
- e. Without hesitation to follow, to seek and to worship –
- f. Imagine the wonder and amazement when God revealed the rest of the story to them. When God allowed them to see that He was doing something unprecedented here, that the King who they came to worship, to understand, even a little that this child was God in the flesh...

III. PURSUED TO WORSHIP

- a. The pursuit itself is an act of worship
- b. Failure to pursue is also a statement of what you worship - consider Herod and the chief priests, who lived less than 6 miles from where the Christ was born, who now could not be

bothered to stir themselves to take a short stroll,
2 hours at a comfortable, brisk walk.

Matthew 8.11-12

c. God honored the honor they gave

- i. Spoke to them
- ii. Did not allow them to be a party to Herod's sin
- iii. Allowed them to see and understand the star and its significance
- iv. Made sure that we still speak of them today

d. Sometimes the things that we don't foresee are the very things that become the most important things

e. The scrolls they had access to were undoubtedly from the Babylonian captivity. So the captivity of the Jews led to the coming of the wisemen

f. The fact of the star is but a small miracle but a miracle nonetheless - it is not to be explained away with the simple ideas of convergences and

alignments, whatever vehicle God used, He announced the birth of His Son to people He chose.

IV. WE MUST BE WILLING TO PURSUE

We must be willing to pursue the promises of God regardless of what things might look like to us

- a. We so often think we need all the answers before we can begin to do what God calls us to do. That if we don't see the whole thing then there is no point.
- b. But God does not give us the whole picture
- c. He will in times of mercy provide us with more information than we expressly NEED, but there is no guarantee that He will do that the next time.
- d. The relationship between promise and pursuit is about
 - i. cultivating trust

- ii. Preparing the circumstance for the fulfillment
- iii. Preparing His people for the promise
- iv. Awaiting the fullness of the times.

e. There is so much good for us reserved in the mystery of God's secret will, that which He has ordained to come to pass and which most certainly SHALL come to pass... but we MUST wait for the time of its revelation.

f. It is mercy unbounded for God to give us, as sustaining hints and whispers, His promise. He gives us the chance to trust, gives us a chance to witness change as it unfolds into promise.