

It is a proven fact in every single person lives that we lose things. Starting when we were babies and lost our soothers, we have continued a trend of misplacing things for pretty much our whole lives. Whether it's a toy when you were a kid, or your homework when you were in school, or your wallet once you were old enough to have one, or now that you drive, you can lose your car keys! TV remotes, phones, papers, pens, you name it, we've lost it. Did you know the replacement of lost things is a 4 billion dollar industry? So - if you lose something, what comes next? Looking!

Here's something: Have you ever stopped to think about all the TIME that you spend looking? It's something in the range of 60 hours a year. We spend about 2.5 full days just LOOKING for things! Well - we have a solution for you!

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How many of you find that to be somewhat of a waste of your money? How many of you would buy that right now? Well, you can't! The entire stock has been sold out! Apparently although it may be a waste of money - finding things is a big deal to us. It makes sense, especially if the thing is valuable, you don't want to spend a ton of time looking for it, and if finding your keys is going to save you time at home and save you time an an uncomfortable chat with your boss at work...sounds like it's worth it.

Time and money - the two things that we use most often to show something is valuable to us right? If we think something is valuable, we sink time and money into that thing - would you agree? It's completely true and applies from everything to our recreation, our children, our hobbies - you name it! If we value it, we put time and money into it. Today, we are going to study some men who sunk massive amounts of time and money into searching for Jesus, and the question of their search was repeated over and over again, and it's the title of our message today - **Where is the King?**

As you've likely guessed, we are speaking about the wise men, the Magi, that group of men who came from far away in the East, following a star that appeared when Jesus was born. Turn to Matthew 2:1-12 (read). So here we have a short little account of these wise men who

came seeking Jesus...but even in those 12 verses, we will be able to see a lot about Jesus, and ourselves, not too mention the wise men and King Herod as well, and it all centres around that one liner question: "Where is the King?" Just like the question last week "how can this be? I am a virgin!" creates a huge set of reactions, so this question also reveals the deep thoughts of the hearts of the wise men, and also King Herod.

Lets actually start with the villain this morning, King Herod. Try to put yourself in his position: your having a great day, eating grapes or something, and thinking how clever you are for throwing your distant cousin in the lions den because now he can't start that subversive plot that you were SURE that he was plotting, when all of a sudden a messenger comes in, and he's pretty nervous. The messenger has news of a crowd of foreign looking men and servants and they are all very excited and are bustling around Jerusalem. The servants are buying supplies, it looks like they've come from far away...but there are some distinguished looking men asking about the new king. They are wondering where the new king of the Jews is!

This is Herod the Great. He was a bloodthirsty king, who was known for simply killing any rivals (family members included) to the throne. If you said or did something that smelled wrong to this king, he just killed you. He's proud, territorial, probably a control freak and very paranoid that someone is going to come and take away his kingdom. He'll do whatever it takes to guard against that. And then some foreign dudes come along and say - "hey! Where's the new King? Where's the TRUE king? So Herod is very upset, and all Jerusalem with him, because this new king constituted a threat against the current ruler and the current way of doing things, and this new threat was Jesus and the kingdom. I actually don't think it's too hard for us to imagine ourselves in Herod's position...because the truth of the matter is...we ARE in Herod's position. Herod had a large kingdom, and Jesus was a threat to that, similarly, we have a small kingdom, and Jesus is a threat to that as well, because there can only be one King on a throne, and while it's small, the throne of our lives is a throne that we jealously guard for ourselves. Tim Keller says "*as we have seen, Jesus came to us claiming to be God, the king. He said, 'anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, Brothers and sisters-yes, even their own life-such a person cannot be my disciple.'*" This is not a commandment to literally become hateful towards one's own family. He is calling, rather, for an

allegiance to him so supreme that it makes all other commitments look weak by comparison. It is a claim of absolute authority, a someone's to unconditional loyalty, and it inevitably triggers a deep resistance within the human heart.” Would you agree with that? In a sermon about this, Keller goes onto say that the question “where’s the King?” is one of the most disturbing questions for the human heart, because we want to remain on the throne of our lives at all costs. He said we would even go so far as to use religion for this, trying to put God in the position of having to do our bidding, because we are so righteous, rather than in the position of servants having to do HIS bidding.

What do you think about that? I had to think about it for awhile, and took a look at my actions and thoughts from years past to see if it was true. I think Keller is right....there’s a little King Herod inside of me, and he fights for the throne of my life with as much passion as the one in our Biblical account right here in front of us. We resist being ruled right? We don’t like authority. In fact a lot of our entertainment reflects that. Many movies, a lot of music, large chunks of the internet all give us that message.

Actually, think a little deeper into the whole concept of “rights and freedoms”. Do these have to do with our own personal sovereignty? You may agree or disagree, I don’t mind....but I tend to think that even the whole concept of rights, freedoms and privacy is all based on human sovereignty, and if humans sovereignty gets taken to far...humans get set up as their own personal god that has absolute authority over their lives. Some would say that’s a good thing... the whole “it’s my life and my free choice”...and that actually is a reality right? However - consider this about us being the supreme ruler of our lives and masters of our own destiny...we know from Scripture that the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Interesting how we seek to rule in our own lives, but the ruler of that life is desperately evil and beyond comprehension. I don’t want that for my life! Do you?

If you doubt that...think about your personal relationship with God, and some of the difficulties involved. Do those difficulties involve obeying Jesus and what HE thinks is good for your life? Do they centre around doing things God’s way instead of your way? Have you ever said “God if you’ll only answer my prayer, I will do THIS for the rest of my life”, only to forget that He did answer it like two weeks later? How many times have you said “I will NEVER do

this again”, only to catch yourself the next day? We are resistant to anyone other than ourselves rule us - we all have a little bit of King Herod in us, and even if we believe in Jesus, and have been forgiven and have the Holy Spirit helping us out, we still have a residual resistance to God’s rule and reign in our lives...you only have to read Romans 7 to see that even the apostle Paul had these issues banging around in himself all the time. If this is you, then I would encourage you to be much more intentional in your discipleship under the Holy Spirit. Like I said a couple weeks ago, find someone who loves you enough to hurt your feelings, and yell at you if you need it, and allow them to have some authority in your life. Let them in enough to tell you when you’re being disobedient to the Spirit, and also to encourage you when you have a small victory. Find a group to pray with, who care about sharpening one another! We need to grow very intentional in allowing God to have the throne of our lives, because we do not belong there - we are not the true King of our lives. That’s Jesus - and that question “where’s the king?” applies very much to our own hearts and lives.

Now, lets move on from the one side of human reaction to the other! The wise men represent something totally different, challenging and inspiring for us to study. So, we know what kind of man Herod is... and at this point, you wonder how wise these wise men actually are, because you’d have thought you’d do your research and known where you were going and what you were walking into - but that’s not the case...why? How could these wise men do this? We don’t have any words on this from the Bible, just that these men showed up with their retinue, which would have been large given the amount of time they were on the road.

By the way - scholars believe that these wise men and their people came from the Babylon region, which was 1500 kilometres away from Bethlehem. So, this trip was a significant investment in terms of time (estimates range from 8 months to 1.5 years for travel time, one way), and supplies for a group of people (it wasn’t just three guys)...we’re looking at a large amount of both time and money put into this trip - why?

Because they are SUPER excited! These men are students of the stars - not magicians or anything, they are men who study the sky. Knowing what we know about the universe now... stars don’t just appear out of no where, and yet this is what happened and these men get all fired up - and why not, this is a huge deal! A new star? That doesn’t happen. And scholars believe

that it rose in an area of the skies which would have caused the men to believe that it came from the Jewish country and back in the day, it was believed that the heavens often gave signs for everyone who was there to read them, and these men interpreted (correctly!) that this star meant a new king had been born and judging by where it was, it as likely a king fo the Jews. So a new king was born, for the Jews, and this was such a momentous thing that these men mount an expedition to...worship this new king? Very interesting...it's like they knew there was something more to this than met the eye. After all they weren't Jews, why would they worship a king of a nation they weren't a part of? Why would they worship at all? These aren't questions I can answer for you, except to give you my best guess, that these men were in touch with the Holy Spirit in some way and somehow knew that this was no ordinary King, and that they wanted to pay him honour in some way. Sometimes I think these guys are great examples of the Romans 1 verses that say that creation is a place where many people start their search for God... these men saw a star and knew something huge was coming - and they started to seek.

Actually, I think this explains why those men blew into Jerusalem and right to King Herod right away. They figured that this was SUCH a big deal that surely the current king would know and have a plan for this new King (maybe the old kings son?!) and surely all of the capital city of Jerusalem would know about it right? Right? Nope. Not at all, and the words of the wise men banged around that city and disturbed the king and the entire city along with him. So then king calls a council and finds out what the Scriptures say about Messiah and then arranges an exchange with these wise men, he trades the location of the Messiah for the promise that these men will return with the precise location of this new King. The wise men figure this is an awesome trade and the king seems so devout that they jump at it. After all, they are unfamiliar with the geography, and perhaps figured they needed help.

I think here is one place where we could take a quick note practically...that there are people out there in the world right now who have the lingo right and the tones right and who look like people who love Jesus and want to worship him, but inwardly are ferocious wolves looking to exploit people who love Jesus. I have no names to drop at this point, but I think we need to take note of something - that the wise men may have acted imprudently in asking out loud "where's the king?" in a foreign land where they don't know what's up, and also in

believing that the current king would be super happy about his successor being born and waiting to replace him. Later in his life, Jesus told his disciples that we need to be wise as snakes and as innocent as doves - basically advocating that we need to use discernment all the time, looking for deception. I'm not saying we should be paranoid, but rather than we need to keep the blinders off our eyes...the wise men didn't sin - they just didn't think it through completely in their excitement and passion!

And excitement and passion is very very apparent - and why shouldn't it be? I think the wise men can be forgiven for their errors - after all, they weren't sinning, just super super excited! A star had appeared to them and had led them to exactly the spot where Jesus was! Look at that in your Bibles! **The star led them to Jesus!** How awesome is that? A supernatural sign led from their home over 1500 kms and what may have been 1.5 years of walking right to the spot where Jesus was! (the reason we think it was 1.5 years is that Herod ascertained the time the star had appeared and then killed all the babies who were under that age). So the wise men arrive at Mary, Joseph and Jesus home and they bow down and worship the boy Jesus just like they said they would and they offer gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh which have huge symbolic value as well as real value for the family. In fact, it's almost like God knew there would be an emergency vacation to Egypt for a few years and provided them with ready valued resources to use or sell as they needed. All of this happened because of the question - where is the King?

There's a lot that we can pull out of this account, and a lot more that I haven't had time to go into this morning, but I want us to think about something else to do with Jesus and these wise men...something that will seem obvious, but something that we must think about during the Christmas season if we are going to get what this season is truly about, and that is the promise of God in Jeremiah 29:13 that "those who seek me will find me if they seek me with all of their heart". I think the wise men of the Christmas account are the absolute perfect examples of that promise, and all that it entails. First of all - these men were watching to see what was going to happen. They were scanning the skies to see what was up. Are we watching? Like are we actually looking for thing to happen, or are we sitting idly by waiting for God to do something magnificent right before our eyes? These men clearly were looking for something, they had their

eyes open and were actively searching for a sign in the heavens. That tells me that there needs to be activity in our search for God. Perhaps we treat our walk with Jesus like it was a TV show, or a movie where it's easy to see what's happening because the TV show makes it obvious that something is happening right now. At times, we claim a show "moves slowly", but it might also mean that we are lazy and unwilling to put some major effort in. The phrase "seek me with ALL YOUR HEART", really means that - and these men are an example of that. Are you actively watching to see what God is doing in your life? Are you prepared to MOVE on it if you see God doing something? Are you prepared to change because of what God does in your life?

These men saw something in creation that they couldn't explain, so they looked into it - likely into the histories of Israel and realized that this star told of a momentous birth. So - they asked the question "where is this King" and they followed it out. They spent huge amounts of money getting together a travelling party, and huge amounts of time on the road travelling, following yonder star. They risked their lives talking about a new king in a land that already had one, and eventually, when they found the king they had been searching for, they worshipped him, and gave again! They had invested hugely in this trip, in this quest - they sought the Lord...and they found Him. They looked for Jesus with everything they had, time, money and passion, and just like God promised - they found Him. Don't you love the enthusiastic approach that these men have? They have seen, they believe and now they act. They are very open about their search, they aren't embarrassed - they are sure of what they have seen and they are following it out, regardless of what other people think. There's something childlike in that pursuit. They have also sacrificed quite a bit to get where they are going. That sounds like the way I want to live my life for Jesus. I want to pursue Jesus with an open and unashamed energy - so much so that people likely wonder "what's up with that guy?" Christmas is a time where we celebrate God's faithfulness to his promises made to so many people over thousands of years - Christmas is the culmination of many of those promises, where we celebrate not only Jesus coming but the faithfulness of God in keeping his promise. The question "where is the King?" highlights a lot of things in our hearts and circumstances, but the biggest highlight in my mind when I hear that is the ring of God's true promise - "you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart"