



Whether they were magi or astrologers, or some now even contend they were Persian priests, for the longest time, we simply called them wise men. And whenever the church would celebrate their journey to the Christ child with Epiphany, whether it was on the actual January 6, the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas, or the Sunday closest to it, as we're doing so today, it would only be natural to ask the question, "Where do we get our wisdom from in our life?" Of course, if you wanted to make your pastors or Sunday school teachers proud, you would do your stereotypical children sermon response: that the correct answer is always, "Jesus." As for me, it may be rather

embarrassing to admit out loud, but for a rather long stretch in my young life, I would find that wisdom source on Tuesday nights around 9:00 on ABC.

There was this sitcom about a guy with a low-rated cable tool show, and it's quite possible I just watched to make myself feel better as the main character showed rather little common sense with maintenance tasks and home repair, as I still do not to this day. But whenever he hit a rough patch in his personal life with family or friends or work or whatever else, he would go outside to the fence to meet his neighbor, who had traveled the world and met some of the most interesting people and studied the greatest of philosophers. So, although the show's stars were Tim Allen and Patricia Richardson and Jonathan Taylor Thomas, there was something about Wilson played by Earl Hindman standing behind the fence. Wilson never set out to solve all of his neighbor's problems with random quotes from Aristotle or Plato, some of those believed to be the wisest in history, but just to give his neighbor, the one struggling, just enough to think about before going back inside the home or the workplace with a newfound perspective or appreciation on life.

Of course, at one point, Wilson provided one of the tried-and-true takes on this whole wisdom thing: "Maybe you shouldn't try to have all the answers, and instead ask more questions. You see... a truly wise [one] always has more questions than answers." Is it rather simplistic on this day when the church celebrates a rather momentous occasion in the spreading of the Gospel: that the light of Christ will reach those supposedly way far off in the distance? Perhaps. Except, I do wonder about the journey back for the magi, astrologers, wise men, whatever you want to call them.

We don't exactly know what happened once they started back home from seeing the Christ child. But there's this part of me that hopes they went back with more questions than answers. There is a part of me that wonders if their still-holy conversations included, "What just happened there? How does this change things for us? How does this change the world? What's going to happen to us not just on this different road, but once we get home? What are we going to do with this child for all humanity? What's going to happen to him? What's going to happen to his family? What does this all mean? Can wisdom really come from that, from a child, from the most meager of surroundings? Can good really come from all the way over there?"

Oddly enough, some of those questions, whether they were asked out loud by those wandering souls or not, are still being asked today. Sometimes inside church building walls. Sometimes not. But, as a new year begins: a year when the church will have to face such questions within our own faith journey with Christ, and with those who are taking a different path altogether; it is yet another year for the church to be the safe haven for those with the questions. It is yet another opportunity for us to be the place where the magi found not just safety in Jesus Christ for those wonderings and questions and curiosities, but where they found a different kind of wisdom entrenched in love and compassion and grace and hope and new life, so much so that they were willing to take an unfamiliar path, because they believed in doing so, they were upholding that love and compassion and grace and hope and new life, so

that the supposed highest and mightiest of king could not do anything to stop it. In their newfound wisdom, they believed they were protecting the Christ child so that more of the world would find this Gospel meant for them all.

Nevertheless, questions are still being asked. Sometimes that causes frustration in the church, to be sure. “Why can’t everyone have found the answers by now?” as if we have it all figured out anyway. However, the truth is, we need the questions to be asked. That means enough are still wondering, still curious, about this Christ child. That means they care enough to ask. That means they’re not giving up. That means God isn’t giving up on them either, on the church, on the world. And on those faith journey roads, some we know all too well, some we have no idea the terrain, through it all, more light gets to be shared, because the light of Christ is more than willing to go all the way over there, so that more joy may be shared even in the questions of faith. So, for that Greatest News for all the earthly stops along the way, we certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!