“Guidance for the Wandering”

Week 5 | December 30, 2018 | Matthew 2:1-12

**Sermon Summary**

Darkness is oppressive. Scientific research concludes that we are not made for darkness. When we are physically separated from light there are deep emotional, physical, and psychological ramifications. We weren’t created for darkness, and yet we choose it daily. Spiritual research affirms the scientific research. We actively choose darkness when we believe that we can find goodness apart from God and rebel against Him. When we choose this, we end up experiencing shame and guilt, an oppressive burden that we don’t have to carry. But when we are being guided by our darkness we are left wandering trying everything we can to remove this burden. God sent a light – a star – in the midst of darkness as a guide to the wandering to point us to hope, restoration, and redemption. This light, this star, takes us to Jesus. In the story of the wise men we see that God introduces himself through a light in darkness sent to guide the wandering back to Himself. God freely sent this light to the wise men not because they deserved it or earned it. In fact, wise men, or astrologers as they are known by occupation, are labeled ‘pagan sinners’ in the Old Testament, and yet one of the first groups of people to discover the Light that God has sent, Jesus, is a group of sinners. This light would come into the world to offer what we all crave and desire- meaning, fulfillment, healing, and restoration.

Darkness hides, light reveals. Darknenss bring shame and guilt, light brings freedom. Darkness makes us wander, light guides.

How do we respond to this Light? According to the text, there are three responses:

1. **Anger**- We see Herod respond in anger. Look at Matthew 2:3, 16. Herod is a king; he’s the boss. He is the ultimate authority. When he hears that a new king has come, a King of Kings, who will claim all authority in Heaven and on Earth he responds in anger. Why? Because he likes being in control, he likes being in charge. He wants to continue being the boss where he can choose what he can and cannot do. He doesn’t want to release control over to Jesus as his new personal king.
2. **Apathy**- We see the Chief priests and teachers of religious law respond with apathy. These guys knew more about God than anyone at this point in time. Look at Matthew 2:4-6. They come to a realization that the prophecy of Jesus coming has been fulfilled, that God has come in human flesh to make right what we made wrong and their response is “meh”. They are not emotionally moved by this news at all. Instead of going and meeting Jesus, they continue on with the every day lives. They know a lot *about* God, they don’t *know* God. They settle for a subpar relationship with God because they haven’t experienced Him the way God has designed us to know Him.
3. **Adoration**- We see the Wise Men respond in adoration and worship. They travel 243 hours from their homeland to get to Jesus, having no idea where their journey would ultimately end. All they knew was that the star was something different than anything else they had ever known before. This journey was fueled by nothing but *faith*- faith that they would be radically changed and experience something new. They were guided by the Light and were brought out of darkness and experienced Jesus. This experience prompted adoration and worship.

When we choose to no longer trust in ourselves to find the goodness our hearts desire and instead trust in Jesus we no longer wander in darkness and now are guided by the Light- Jesus. This light brings freedom from shame, reveals the mess in our lives, and guides us out of wandering.

**Discussion Guide**

1. Read Matthew 2:1-12
2. Darkness hides and light reveals. We tend to have areas in our lives that we want to keep in the dark. We don’t want anyone to know what we struggle with. God did not create us to hide our mess in the dark. What stuff are you hiding in the dark? We think we can carry the mess all our own. When we do this we end up carrying a burden of shame and guilt. God wants you to be free from this burden by bringing your mess into the light.
3. Can you relate to Herod in your response to the Light? Do you have a hard to relinquishing control and handing over all authority to Jesus?
4. Can you relate to the chief priests and teachers of religious law? They were lukewarm in their faith with Jesus. Read Revelation 3:15-16. Are you lukewarm with your personal relationship with Jesus right now?
5. How would your life look different if you responded in adoration and total worship like the wise men?