



Full of Faith

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

This coming Sunday is the Epiphany of Our Lord and the Gospel Lesson is Matthew 2:1-12. Epiphany is the day, January 6, in which we especially celebrate the manifestation, or revelation, of our Lord to the world. This manifestation to the world that Jesus is the Christ begins with the story of the Magi, the

Wise Men, who seek the one born to be king, following the star to Bethlehem where they bow down to adore Jesus.

The story makes me think of Jesus' words in Luke 11:9-10, "So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened." Jesus' words invite us to live our lives assuming God loves to help those who seek him. In fact, Jesus invites his disciples in these verses and those surrounding it to orient our lives toward seeking God and praying to God in faith. Jesus makes it clear that God intends good for us. God loves to bless us and can be trusted to help those who are asking to receive, those who are seeking to find, and those who are knocking to have the door opened for them.

The problem is that many of us who are religiously committed have stopped seeking. We seek only what we already know. We seek only information and insights that continue to confirm what we already think. We seem to think that we've already arrived. We are afraid that if we keep seeking, keep learning, keep wrestling with our questions, keep struggling to understand what we don't yet understand, we will lose the little we've already found.

I think of the religious elite in Jerusalem, "the chief priests and scribes of the people," who knew the Scriptures well, but weren't seeking, weren't open to what God was up to down in Bethlehem. King Herod "was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him." Can you imagine? God is up to something wonderful. "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people," the angel told the shepherds. But for Herod and, no doubt, for many committed and even well-intentioned religious people ("all Jerusalem"), fear was the response.

What characterizes your orientation toward God, toward life, toward growing and serving as a disciple of Jesus? Are you a person who seeks God and God's leading trusting that God will guide you? Or do you seek God and God's leading afraid that if you get it wrong, all is lost? Are you more *faith* full or more *fear* full as you seek to grow, serve, and venture forward in life? These are critical questions as we venture into the new year ahead. Jesus invites us to a faith-full adventure trusting God to be with us and to guide us as we go.

Prayer:

Lord of light, I thank you that your light shines for all to see. Let your light so shine into me that my sins would be cleansed away, and your goodness would fill me. Let your light so shine in me that others would recognize your peace and joy in me. Let your light so shine through me that everyone I pray for and interact with may know they that you love them, and I do, too. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Verse for Meditation and Memorization:

"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Luke 11:9-10

Some Thing(s) to Try:

- Meditate on the suggested verses of the week. Try emphasizing different words each time you read or recite the verse, noting how each word directs your thinking.
- Practice sitting still with God away from distractions for five minutes or more each day Try slowly breathing in and out, saying, "Let your light shine."
- Pray about what God is calling you to seek in the coming year. What is a way God might want you to grow or serve?
- As you look to the year ahead, talk with God about whether you tend toward being full of faith or full of fear. Talk with God about the details of your feelings. Ask God to help you be full of faith as you venture forward.
- Practice praying in the way the Apostle Paul urges us to in Philippians 4:6-7. Talk with God about the things that trouble you, raising up your head toward heaven to the God who loves you. Give thanks for God's faithfulness, that he sees you, hears you, and answers you as you pray. Pray with joyful confidence and thanksgiving. Breathe in God's peace.
- As you head into challenging situations today/this week, stand still, raise up your head, give thanks for God's presence, and pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with wisdom, faith, and love.

Further Suggested Readings:

- Isaiah 60:1-6
- Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
- Ephesians 3:1-12
- Luke 11:1-13