

CRIBB>S NOTE – JANUARY 4, 2009

Now that Jesus has been born and Christmas is behind us, what are you going to do with your life? It's been a couple of weeks since we got the word, the Good News, about the birth of the Messiah. Now, we learn about the Magi, a group of scholars from the East, who dropped everything they were doing to make a dangerous journey in search of the Child. Would you drop everything for Jesus?

We live busy lives. There are things we feel we must do because we are responsible people. But, would we stop what we are doing to answer the call of ministry? Can we pull ourselves away to live a more committed life of faith?

When we delve into the story of the Wise Men who found the Baby Jesus in their search for the real king, they made a detour that landed them in the palace of a madman who was the puppet king of the ruling Roman regime.

Herod was insecure and depended on fear and brutality to control his subjects. When the Magi arrived and asked for directions to the special child who had been born, Herod used his skills of lies and deception to persuade his guests to find the baby and return to him with news of his whereabouts. The Wise Men were quite serious about their search and had no intention of stopping until they found the newborn king.

We know the rest of the story. They carried with them precious gifts fit for a real king. After discovering the Christ Child they were told in a dream not to go back to Herod, but to take a different road back home. Their decision to find Jesus was their primary objective. It meant they had to accept the inconvenience of changing their life's priorities.

The hardest part of doing anything worthwhile is thinking about it. We spend a lot of time fretting about what might happen. The uncertainty of doing a new thing gives us pause. We invest energy and time worrying about the possibility of things that may or may not happen. We exhaust ourselves just thinking about the thing we need to do without ever taking the necessary steps to get it done.

This is true about our faith. To the extent we delay putting our faith into action--- failing to practice our faith with heightened discipline--- can cause us to live in the mush of spiritual quicksand. Put another way as described in the book of James, "Faith without works is dead." No matter how often we attend church we may never get past rituals and traditions. We refuse to carry our faith into the lives of others.

The story of the Magi inspires us to consider how seriously we take our faith. Their knowledge of the coming Messiah was sufficient to push them out of their routines and caused them to pursue an ordinary star that led to a strange land. They got lost along the way but they did not give up.

Life is like that. When we take a 'road less traveled,' there is a high probability we will step out of bounds and lose our way. Yet, our faith gives us the assurance that no matter where we end up, God is there with us. Even if we stumble across a nefarious character like Herod, God can provide a way out and caution us to step carefully.

Here is the point. We spend our lives doing what is familiar and secure. We operate at a level of competence that encourages us not to make any move that might jeopardize what we know and do best. That is fine. But, more may be required of us. Our faith pushes us to go out-of-bounds into the arena of discomfort and inconvenience. We are called to go among strangers and integrate our lives with them.

Even Wise Men (sic) can get lost and need to ask directions. We don't have all the answers or the clarity to know with certainty the outcome of our response to God's call. But that is not the point.

Our faithfulness and obedience guide our every step. God is more faithful than we and loves us more than we could ever love God. That drives us to take another road when the path we are on fails to lead us to liberation and salvation. What road will you take in search of Jesus? What will you do with your life for Christ?.

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