I want to bring to you a Central and often overlooked point/theme of the birth of Christ. I warn you that it’s not complicated nor will it probably blow your mind with cosmic truth. Instead it is simple and basic… **The Christ child could be found.** The redeemer of all mankind was findable. We know that the shepherds found him and the Magi – The wisemen, found Him. Before today is over I want us to find Him..

The Bible is very clear on how to find God. There are only 2 things required in coming to God.

Hebrews 11:6 …for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Encountering God requires these 2 things…

**#1 Believe He exists**

**#2 Believe that He will reward your search.**

This is basic and simple… yet Religion has found many ways to mess it up.

Religion often puts False requirements on coming to God.

There are a great number of people in our world today that aren’t coming to God because they don’t think they can meet the requirements of religion. There may be someone in this room today that feels uncomfortable in this church service because think think they don’t meet the requirement. Maybe you looked around and compared yourself to others around you… I don’t worship like them, my family isn’t as pretty, for some reason I don’t cry during worship songs, I don’t begin to understand this hand raising thing, sometimes I doubt, I have a hard time taking scripture at face value… I don’t know if I meet the requirements…

Why make it complex? God makes it simple. Believe He Exists and Believe he rewards the search.

Agnosticism dominates our world… Agnostics BELIEVE God may exists… but that God is no longer interested in humanity… and they think because God has turned His back – God must not be worth the search.

Matthew 2:1-2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

The star of Bethlehem is remarkable for only 1 reason. It was no doubt beautiful. It got the attention of the star watchers, but so does every other astronomical anomaly. We often think of the nativity and see the star... but throughout scripture there isn’t much importance placed upon the star. The stars appearance doesn’t fulfill prophecy… The star is important only because what was on the other side of the star was important…

The wise men, the Magi, followed the star and it led them to a new level of faith.

Let’s make something clear… The Magi were men of faith, but not a Christian or Jewish faith. They were Astrologers. They were pagans, heathens and mystics. They were Occult. They ascribed to a strange belief system that included Pantheism which led them to worship nature… They were as likely to worship trees, rocks, and squirrels as the messiah baby Jesus.

The faith that they practiced was adverse to Judiasm. In fact, the witch craft they practiced would have been punishable by death in the nation of Israel.

These men met none of the religious requirements… But… **they believed God existed and that He would reward a search.**

While practicing their incorrect beliefs they saw a star… They believed there was a King on the other side of that star. How did they believe that? I have no idea… but they believed it so strongly that they left their far away nation and followed the star.

They believed God was findable.

To find Jesus they would have to step across their belief system into new pathways. They literally walked into a new land where they could no longer practice witchcraft. I imagine they walked right up to that boundary and considered that before they crossed over.

God is findable but the search will change you. Most people would say they want to find God… the trouble is that not everyone is willing to change.

The same is true for us. Even though we may be Christians today, as we search and follow we will be led into new paths/dimensions. Following God will always bring you to the edge of your belief system. You will have to decide if you are willing to take the next step. We must believe that God rewards the search and that His reward is worth the journey! His reward is worth whatever change we have to make.

Matthew 2:1 the Magi asked King Herod “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Verse 2 “When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.”

King Herod was not practicing astrology or pantheism – He was practicing Judiasm! The Magi went to worship the Christ and King Herod formulated a plan to destroy the Christ.

People put a lot of stock in their belief systems and are very defensive about the subject. Most people think their beliefs are right and everyone else is wrong… Herod espoused the correct belief system but he couldn’t have been more wrong!! The Magi had an incorrect belief system but they were willing to follow this star all the way to the manger.

The Magi followed that star and it eventually led them to a Jewish prophet.

Micah 5:2 (NIV)

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clansof Judah,
out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

This is a critical moment for the Magi. They have traveled all this way by their belief system, but now they need to step beyond their belief system if they are going to ever find this King.

So many people come to this moment where they are exposed to more truth than they had previously known. Many people don’t continue further into truth because their family heritage didn’t believe this truth… My great grandmother hadn’t ever stepped past this mark… You don’t understand… we’ve always been southern Baptist… Lutheran, Episcopalian, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon…

Like the Magi, we too must choose between serving a religion or serving the living God. Had they refused to take that next step and follow the words of the prophet Micah they would have had to turn around never fulfilling their search. BUT THEY DID take that next step and their journey ended with them kneeling before the Christ – worshiping Him with their gifts – and them receiving the presence of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

We must believe that God rewards the search and that His reward is worth the journey! His reward is worth whatever change we have to make.

We mustn’t cling so tightly to what we know that we won’t take the next step into the unknown.  Following God’s sign will always lead you to step into the unknown. Following God’s star will lead you to new experience and new revelation.

* **BAPTISM STORY - “I don’t believe in speaking in tongues…”**

Following God’s star will lead you to new experience and new revelation.

The Apostle Paul would say it this way…

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV) Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on…

I don’t care about your belief system. I don’t care about what experiences you’ve had. Those are well and good… I’m not here to discount anyone’s beliefs… but I’m here to tell you that you can go further. **Are you willing to continue your search?**

Belief in Christ is wonderful… but you would really be missing out if you didn’t continue searching and find Repentance…

Baptism, Holy Spirit

**If you don’t continue who knows what you are missing out on!! Eye has not seen…**

There is more to God than what you know right now. Everything you know is simply bringing you to the next step…

The rich young ruler, in Luke 18, kept all the commandments of the Law… Jesus told him he lacked 1 thing… The rich young ruler went away sad… He thought his religious construct would satisfy all the requirements… Remember that following God only requires Believing HE IS and that He will reward the search.

The 1 thing the rich young ruler was lacking was standing right in front of him… **He was closer than he knew…**

It’s amazing! By all accounts, these heathen Magi were so unlikely. They seem so far away in longitude and their notions of God somehow seem further. The truth is – we are all closer than we think.

Paul, speaking on Mars Hill, declared that God has given everyone life and breath and marked out Time, History and Nations… Here is why…

Acts 17:27 (NIV)

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

One thing we get so very wrong in religion – We declare some people to be close to God and others to be far away. He is not far from any of us.

The star of Bethlehem was not Hidden!!

The prophecy of Christ’s birth was not hidden!!

 It wasn’t easy. It took time. It took effort. But they found Him – and so can You.

The only reason someone doesn’t find God – They don’t look for Him.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV) You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Seek and Ye shall find…

I don’t want this church to be full of perfect people.

I don’t desire this church to be filled with people trying to meet Religious requirements.

I really don’t care if the people in this church have 100% correct theological understanding.

I no longer put as great an emphasis on being able to articulate faith…

I want this church to be full of searchers.

People that search for God – Find God.

Being saved doesn’t end the search…

Luke 2 tells a 3 verse story of a widow named Anna. She was widowed and old in age. Even though she faced hardship – She searched – She saw Jesus as he really was – The Redemption of Israel.

**Don’t come to this altar seeking something – Seek someone.**

**Do you believe He is worth following? Is He worth the search?**

**Will you search for Him during this holiday season?  Will you take the next step…**