

The Feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 2019 at St. Anne's Parish, Annapolis  
The Rev'd. Timothy J. Mulder, preaching on Matthew 2.:1-12

"Did you find everything you were looking for?" the clerk asked at the check-out line. Not a bad question not only for those wise men from the East, but for each of us as we begin a new year. "Did you find what you were looking for?" is really quite a spiritual question.

But I wonder if we might have it backwards. Perhaps this story is not so much who they were looking for, as it is about the God who was looking for them. God gives clues, signs and stars and puts people into our path to lead us and point us to God.

And the detours are as important as the destination in this story. These wise men were not the way the story had been going for the chosen people of Israel and the longed for Messiah. They symbolized the foreigner, the outsider, the people of other cultures and other faiths. For the writer of Matthew's Gospel, one of the first things to say about Jesus was that God is for the outsider, whoever that is in each successive age. Discovering just who that is for us in our day is our faith journey.

But now I still want to go back to that clerk's questions, "Did you find what you were looking for?" As we start a new year ...

What are you looking for from prayer?

What are you looking for from God?

What are you looking for if you sacrifice, that is to say, give up for love's sake, your time, your talents, your treasures?

I'd like to ask you to keep an open mind and a flexible heart this year. You may find God when you are looking for something else.

You might be looking for a job, or career advancement, but you might, through that difficult search, find a deeper prayer life. What if your prayer was to ask God to guide you, to use you, to show you how to use your gifts and abilities this year?

You might be looking for ways to be a good parent or a better spouse or friend, but you may find values through that journey that are eternal rather than merely temporal. It's not whether you simply get the kids to the soccer match on time, but what you talk about on the way there and back that counts.

You might be looking for a way to serve in your community, but discover that in giving your life away you actually find it.

You might be looking for health, but find in the midst of suffering God's love for you that never leaves you. In fact, it may be God's presence in those dark hours that is what makes it possible not just to make it through, but to discover blessings as well.

You might be searching for knowledge or wisdom, but find a peace which passes all understanding when you can put aside having to be right all the time, or logical or reasonable and discover what Kirkegaard called the leap of faith.

You might be looking to become a stronger person in your dealings with others, but find that in forgiveness and compassion is the greatest strength of all. St. Paul said, Be gentle with one another, tenderhearted."

Some call them kings, some magi or astrologers. The Bible calls them "wise" because they searched for a new life and discovered that God was looking for them. And so they worshiped God and discovered their lives filled with joy.

I hope that happens for you in this new year as well. And it will, if you are open to letting God help you find far more than you were looking for.