

## What Makes a Right Christmas?

Or

## The Three Wise Geo-Cachers

Scripture: Matthew 2:1 – 11 & Psalm 105:4

I have a good friend named Brian Valencik. He is a retired Forest Ranger living in PA. In fact, Brian was hired as the first full time Forest Ranger in PA. He and his lovely wife Sherri like to go Geo-caching. Do you know what Geo-caching is?

Geo-caching started in 2000 and it uses a GPS device to find a small gift called a cache which has been hidden by someone and the GPS location is posted on a Geo-cache website.

Brian, Sherri, and their family do a lot of Geo-caching. They love to search for the caches using their GPS device. They started in 2005 and have found 2067 Geo-caches. They have found 2043 caches in USA, 19 in Canada, 2 in Italy, 1 in Switzerland, 1 in France, and 1 in Great Britain. Of the 2043 found in USA, they come from 10 states and Washington DC. There are over 4 million caches out there in the world in 19 different countries. There is a half million in USA! So good luck Brian and Sherri – you have got a way to go to find them all!

My wife and I have gone Geo-caching with them a few times. One time we did it down here in Delaware. It was 90+ degrees out in July. We found four caches but the adventure had its moments – riding in an air-conditioned car together was great but getting out of the car to search for the cache was excruciating and sweet!

Now let me share some information about the three wisemen or the three Magi or the three wise Geo-cachers!

The names of the three wise men are – Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar or Caspar. They are said to be three kings, not a king like we know it but a leader within their countries.

Balthasar was the King of Arabia or Ethiopia. Melchior was the King of Persia. And Gaspar was the King of India. They could have traveled from Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and India. Their journey probably took 50 to 60 days! And they were all believed to be astrologers.

In fact, while I was in India on a mission trip, I visited a church that honored Gaspar and stated that his remains were buried nearby. We seem to know a lot about the three Magi but there is also a lot of different information out there!

The three wise men were well educated and they took on this journey because they all had seen a great star in the sky. Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar were the first Geo-cachers!

So what makes a right Christmas? A small toy, fine clothes, a beautiful Christmas tree, expensive jewelry, wonderful parties, well written Christmas cards, or gourmet food? These are all things that can make Christmas nice but maybe not 'right'. These are not the only things that can make a right Christmas.

A right Christmas is a person – Jesus Christ! The Lord Jesus Christ is God's great gift to us. He is the beauty and the glad tidings of Christmas.

The wise men from the east finally arrived at the inn in Bethlehem seeking the meaning of the Star. Their journey had been long and toilsome. Their journey even was a perilous journey with crossing a desert and forging rivers. In spite of all the hardships, they were now near their destination. In spite of their difficulties and obstructions, they realized their objective. They had followed a Star and had found a manger. They have successfully found a new born king!

The secret of the perseverance of the wise men sprang from this – They were strong because they were guided by a star, a sign from God about the GPS location of the Messiah. They had looked to the lamp of heaven and not earth's candle. They battled bravely and journeyed with unquenchable zeal. Nothing could turn them from their unheard of quest.

It was the fact that they followed a light from heaven hung aloft by God and they did not follow a light of the earth! They followed God's Global Positioning guide – the star.

There is a lesson here – when a person can follow a great purpose with steadiness through ridicule, insult, and obstruction. And with a strength of will to complete a journey – there is more – there is God!

A person who can see a star and wonders aimlessly and vainly in a trackless wilderness – that person can find something more – there is God!

When we believe that no effort is in vain and that there is not a pain in an unknown journey – there is meaning – there is God!

When we live a life filled with a quiet purpose like the wise men and we come to a stable at last – there is meaning – there is God!

There were so many people in the inn in Bethlehem that Mary and Joseph had to seek shelter in a barn or stable. There was no bed in the stable so when Jesus was born, a manger became his bed. A feeding trough for animals became the Son of God's cradle.

There were many people around in Bethlehem but only the wise men recognized what was happening so close to them. Why were all these people blind to what was happening? They were looking for nothing in particular, they were just going through life without a purpose.

The wise men saw Jesus, for they had sought him. They found all they looked for and they saw a little more – they saw God!

They found the child Jesus and they brought gifts to share with their discovery.

There are many people around today but only the wise will recognize what happened in Bethlehem. Why are so many people blind to what has happened? Maybe they are looking for nothing in particular, they are just going through life without a purpose.

The wise will see Jesus because they are seeking him. The wise will find all they are looking for and they will see a little more – they will see God! When we find Jesus, we must bring a gift to share with our discovery – ourselves in service to Jesus!

Christmas is our God sharing his one and only Son with all creation so that we might come to understand his love for us and become his redeemed children through the new birth. This is why God revealed himself through the child, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are born anew in Christ!

Let us pray:

God, our Father, we thank you for the greatness and the wonder of Jesus. We thank you for Christ's birth and we celebrate your coming to us. The real reason for all joy and happiness is found in the babe in the manger.

This great gift of love may forever spring eternal and may the spirit of Christmas last all year long. Let us forever hear the message of 'Peace on Earth'. Let our hearts say to the world 'O Holy Night'.

O God, may we henceforth dedicate ourselves to lead lives in which your glory will be our first and foremost concern. May we speak of peace, live with peace, and share peace. May your love always and forever have room in our homes and hearts.        AMEN.