

Everybody has questions.

[8:45am] Many people have questions for God. Maybe one of these is yours:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&v=KAIdRzwrPEA&NR=1>

[10:00am] Kids are known for asking questions. Here's a video of 10 questions kids ask in Sunday school. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOMzmPxcA2Q>

Questions are our introduction to the world around us. We use questions to seek out information, to inform our opinions; to gain wisdom and insight into life; to explore the wonders of the world.

If you could ask one question about this year New Year what would it be? [Talk to your neighbor for a minute about the question you would ask.]

Our text this morning revolves around one question. And the answer to the question leads to two dramatically different responses. As I read from Matthew 2:1-12 see if you can identify what I believe is the one big question.

So what do you think the big question is? [Responses]

The big question is voiced first by the magi and then by King Herod: "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?"

I think this question, or some form thereof, is the question that everyone asks. Think about some of the questions: Where is the one who made us? Who is the one who gives us meaning and purpose? Who is the one who can answer my questions? We often spend a good portion of our life wrestling with questions of faith. As St. Augustine said of that wrestling, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

We ask questions of faith because I believe that everyone is searching for an answer. And while some, like the magi, find the new born king and the answer to their questions and fall down to worship him; others try to keep the answer from conflicting with their own personal kingdom- much the way that Herod did when he sought to silence this newborn king.

Think about the questions that your friends and family ask. They are asking hard questions about life, its meaning and purpose. These are at the heart- questions of faith.

The really interesting thing about questions is how God uses the questions that people ask to bring them closer to him. But what if the people who ask the questions never have anyone to answer those questions?

What if no one would have answered the magi's questions? They might still be wandering the hills of Palestine!

What if you weren't around to answer the questions that your friends are asking? And who is going to be there for your kids when they have questions? Who would they turn to? What kind of answers would they get? How long would they search aimlessly until someone with the right answer came along? Or would they simply give up in frustration?

The really neat thing about our God is that God doesn't just create a longing- a desire to question- within each of us and then not make it possible for us to find the answer. No, our God is available everywhere for everyone every moment of every day!

David in Psalm 139 says: 'Where can I go from your Spirit? If I go up to the heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there!' God is in every corner of Creation and here is the important part- moving in the life of everyone alive! God's Spirit is at work in every person's life and causing them to ask questions that will open their heart and mind to welcome God into their life. The spectacular thing about this is that God has also called us alongside the Holy Spirit to be partners with God in this searching process. You see we never 'take God' into any situation; God is already there.

This work of God whereby God is actively pursuing us with a desire to get our attention is something we call prevenient grace. This is simply the belief that God is always preparing people's hearts to be receptive to the movement of God in their life. And the awesome thing is that God is willing to use us as a part of that prevenient grace. We are partners in planting seeds, watering and nurturing the development of people's quest for knowing and experiencing God.

During November and December I made several references to our vision statement and specifically to the fact that if we are going to love God and love others then we need to live our faith beyond Sunday. But there is another line in that statement which is vitally important here. That is the line which says: Build relationships that allow others to explore faith;

As we've been learning during Advent and Christmas about how to enter the lives of others, (literally, how to Live our faith beyond Sunday and Connect with others) we've learned that you and I must enter the world much like Jesus entered the world. Through the mystery/miracle of the incarnation; we learned from Jesus about the importance of presence, proximity, powerlessness, passion and proclamation. Now we need to understand our role in the prevenient grace of God.

Simply put you and I are part of God's plan to help people discern the move of God in their lives. We are there to help others discover God who is already present and at

work in their lives. So as we enter people's lives we are there to build relationships that allow others to explore faith. (And as an aside, if you are interested in learning how to discern the move of God in your own life, may I suggest you participate in our Experiencing God study that begins January 8. Maybe you could even invite someone who is searching to join you!)

Simply the best way to participate with the Holy Spirit in another person's life is to ask questions. Think of your own faith questions. Chances are that if you've had the question so has someone else. As you help them to form the question you can also be there to help them answer the question by sharing your own faith story.

Right where you are, God is moving to draw and connect people into the reality of knowing God.

You and I are partners with the Holy Spirit in revealing God and giving people who do not know God a way to put a name on the things that God is doing in their lives. As agents of Jesus, we can draw upon the experiences of others and give these experiences their true meaning by directing people to the One who is the fulfillment of all human longing.

I think it is interesting that Matthew tells us the story of the magi's searching. These restless travelers out to find this newborn king were not Jews in search of the Messiah. They were just outsiders that God had invited into His story of grace. It was their questions about the stars that sent them on their search of this new King. Little did they know at the time that they would have such a prominent part in the Christmas story. But it all began with a question.

What's your one question? Our questions are the pathway to finding the answer that we all want and need. If you are asking questions of faith we want to encourage you to keep asking. We're not afraid of the questions because we know that it is in the asking that we find answers.

What are the questions being asked by those whose lives you've entered? Do you understand the place that you have in helping them to form the questions and seek out the answers? God is and will continue to answer those questions; but God is expecting you to be a part of the process.

To ENTER

- by being PRESENT with;
- by being in PROXIMITY of;
- by living POWERLESSLY among;
- by entering the PASSION of;
- by boldly PROCLAIMING the Good News to;

and by being part of God's PREVENIENT grace.

This is what it means to ENTER the lives of others!

As we begin this New Year I want to encourage you to keep asking the questions. I think that you will find the answer in a God who entered our world 2,000 years ago as a tiny baby. A baby found by those who were willing to ask the hard questions of life.