

Treasure Hunt  
The Hunt for of the Treasure  
Mat 2:1-12

*The way it was told me to me, the boy's name was Johnny. He was no more than 5 or 6, and his parents were totally puzzled.*

*It seems that a week before Christmas, Johnny came in and announced that he no longer wanted any of the toys he had included on his Christmas list. "Didn't you write Santa Claus asking for them," his mother asked.*

*Little Johnny answered, "Yes, but I went hunting for present in the closet the other day and I've already got all of them!"*

I guess little Johnny understood something you and I need to learn today: **If you expect to find the treasure of the season, you're going to have to go hunting for that treasure!** That's really the third critical lesson that I have discovered we must learn if we ever hope to discover the real treasure of the season. Now, if you have been around Ryot this Christmas, you know that we are on a treasure hunt. And the reason for that is because the more I thought about it and the more I prayed about it, the more convinced I became that there is a real treasure to this season. However, if we are going to encounter that treasure, we're going to have to hunt for it. Jesus is the real treasure of this season, but so many people go through the Christmas season and never discover that treasure, never encounter Jesus is a fresh way. I am convinced that non believers miss it, as well as believers miss it. And so this year, we have decided to go on a treasure hunt to discover that treasure.

Now, to make things more interesting, I've actually hidden a real treasure somewhere in our church. No, it's not a chest of gold, but it is a real treasure.

- A gift certificate for a free snow shoveling of your home.
- A gift certificate for a Sunday dinner with Christy and me.
- A \$25 gift certificate to the mall.
- A \$25 gift certificate for gasoline.
- A gift certificate to Fishers story

Are you getting excited about finding the treasure?

Well, we said that each week for the four Sundays of Christmas, you will have the opportunity to procure one piece of our treasure map. You will need all four pieces of the map in order to decipher the clues that will lead you to the hidden treasure. The first week, we showed a piece of the map: **[picture of first piece of map]** did you find it? Then last week we showed you map piece #2: **[show second picture]** how many of you found that one? Well, here is the location of map piece #3: **[show picture of Jim & Dixie Miller]** I remind you that you will need all four pieces of the map to decipher the clues that will lead you to the hidden treasure. And that treasure has been carefully secured so that it cannot be located until all of the treasure map pieces are out on Christmas Day. Now, the only reason we are doing this treasure hunt is to get us hunting for the real treasure of the season. We all realize, I hope, that there is a real treasure - and it's not a parking spot close to the mall door (although that would be greatly appreciated, right?) There is a real treasure to this season; but unless we are willing to hunt for it; we won't find it. And so we have been on a treasure hunt this year, checking out what the clues to this treasure can tell us. Today, I want to share the 3<sup>rd</sup> clue to the real treasure of the season and that is the hunt for the treasure. You can have a map and you can know the location; but you will never discover the treasure if you fail to hunt for it. So I want us to look at the first hunters who discovered the real treasure of this season and see what we can learn from them about hunting for that real treasure this season. Let's meet our original treasure hunters. And let me simply share with you what the Lord seemed to share with me this week.

1) In order to hunt for the treasure of the season it is going to take a **drastic** openness.

It says there, *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."* (Mt 2:1-2)

What struck me was that these Magi, these "wise men" were very open - teachable individuals. And I find that openness is always the avenue for teachableness. These Magi were open and teachable because of a couple of different ways:

a) They believed there was a treasure worth **hunting**. Otherwise they never would have traveled the distance. You have to go out of your way to hunt for treasure. **Are you open** to go out of your way to hunt for the real treasure of the season?

b) They were willing to face the possibility that they didn't know **everything**. Where is this king to be born? We don't know everything, even if they do call us "wise men." **Are you open** to the possibility that you don't already know everything there is to know about the real treasure of the season? You will never discover the treasure if you never hunt for the treasure, but that hunting takes a drastic openness. So tell me: **how open are you this Christmas?** Open enough to admit that you don't know everything? Open enough to go out of your way to look for that treasure? *I remembering hearing about a lady who purchased a new vacuum cleaner for herself for Christmas. It was what she wanted, and so that's what she got.*

*She went to the store and had the salesman demonstrate the various models until she settled on the one she thought would do the trick. It had all the attachments and all the bells and whistles you could imagine.*

*The problem was that when she got it home, she was terribly unimpressed. The thing simply did not work the way she expected it to. The crazy thing kept going off and on.*

*Well, the woman got mad at the whole ordeal and called up the vacuum cleaner salesperson and complained about the piece of junk he had sold her.*

*The man was unable to figure out what was wrong over the phone and so he finally agreed to come by her house and look at the thing.*

*When he did, he didn't take him even one minute to figure out what was the matter. The woman, in her haste, had plugged the vacuum cleaner cord into the Christmas tree blinker outlet.*

*So the vacuum cleaner only worked when the Christmas tree lights blinked on!*

You will never discover the real treasure of the season if you are not open to hunting this season. As long as you think you already have it all figured out, this Christmas will probably be a lot like that vacuum cleaner. It will just go on and off and on and off and on and off. And you will never discover the true treasure of the season.

2) If you are going to hunt for the treasure of the season it is going to take a **significant** risk

Notice our treasure hunters again, *"When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'"* Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, *"Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."* (Mt 2:3-8) Herod was disturbed. Some unknown opponent to this throne was being born. That really unsettled Herod, and all Jerusalem was disturbed with him because Herod was known for killing first and asking questions later. There was a real risk or danger for these wise men in this hunt. Herod told them to go search for the child and then let him know so he could go worship the kid. But that didn't fool any of the people of Jerusalem. The reason they were so disturbed was because they knew this guy. The order to go kill all the babies in the region of Bethlehem was no surprise to them.

These Magi were taking a real risk in hunting for this new born king. It could end up costing them a whole lot more than the cost of the gifts they brought or the trip they took. It could end up costing them their lives. That got me to thinking (which is a dangerous thing); that if we want to find the real treasure this year, we must be willing to take a risk as well.

a) We must be willing to take the risk of people misunderstanding us...

b) We must be willing to take the risk of things not turning out the way we expect or want them to turn out...

*A woman once told me about a conflict between her husband and her son over a piece of property. The land, which was quite valuable, had been placed in the father's will for the boy, but the son wanted it now.*

*When his father resisted his demands, the son simply broke off their relationship. He seldom came home and when he did visit, he kept an aloof distance from his father. His mother did convince the young man to spend Christmas at home with the family.*

*With grief that mother described to me the time of exchanging gifts on Christmas Eve. Her son opened all of his presents except the one from his father. It was a tie-shaped box carefully wrapped with a card saying, "To my beloved son - Dad."*

*The box was never opened. It remained under the tree unopened all Christmas day and the next, when the son left. What the son did not know was that the father had neatly folded the deed of the property that the son wanted so badly and placed it in the box as his Christmas gift to his son. And to this day the box is still unopened!*

Risk is always involved when it comes to encountering Jesus. Are you willing to risk that risk?

3) If we are going to hunt this year for the real treasure, it also takes a **legitimate** persistence

It says in our scripture, *"After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."* (Mt 2:9-10) They set out from Jerusalem for Bethlehem. They thought they were already where they were supposed to be, but had to keep moving; rather than settle down and be comfortable. How often do we fail to encounter Jesus afresh at Christmas because we settle for the comfortable? When it comes to hunting for the real treasure of the season, **persistence pays off**. When they persisted they saw the star. The joy of seeing the star: We are on the right track. The joy in the hunt; the joy of the discovery. Do you want to experience any real joy this season? Are you willing to persist in the hunt even if you don't find that "Christmas feeling"? *I've lived in this area now for almost a years. And I have discovered something. I have probably visited just about every grocery store in this area; but there is one thing that I have never found at any of the grocery stores around here. I'm serious. I have never found this item in any of the stores.*

*I have never found Papaya, never. Not at Weis, Giant Eagle, Wal-Mart, or anywhere else. I have never found a single Papaya. You know why, because I have never looked for any Papaya's. Personally, I don't know of any sane person who would!*

*I am absolutely convinced that there won't be any Papaya's, Brussels sprouts, Spinach or Broccoli in heaven; and I can prove it biblically. The Bible says that there will be no weeping in heaven; and if there's spinach or Broccoli or Brussels sprouts or Papaya's in heaven, I'm going to cry big time! Can I get a witness?*

I know people who say that they struggle with seeing God in their lives. They say, "I don't see Jesus working in my life." Or, "I haven't encountered God like you talk about, Pastor." Or, "People don't actually encounter Jesus in their everyday lives." And they are exactly right. People never find Jesus who never seeks Jesus. Just like I never find Papaya when I never look for them. You have to stick with it, persist if you expect to find this real treasure of the season.

4) If you are going to hunt for the real reason for the season, it is going to take a **rare** sacrifice.

*"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh."* (Mt 2:11) It's nice to see that Joseph was able to get Mary and the baby out of the cold manger. How long before that happened? We don't know, but we do know that they were still in Bethlehem. Maybe Joseph stayed there for a while to make enough money to travel home? Whatever the case, it took a while after the birth before these wise guys showed up. When they did, however, they presented their gifts. These gifts were very valuable. In fact it was the way they financed their flight to Egypt. These Magi gave their best to Jesus. We typically assume that these guys were wealthy kings because of the value of their gifts. But the word is "magi" which "the best research" tells us: Magi were professors; men who specifically studied what they believed was the wisdom to be found in the course of the stars and their connection with world events. They were professors and astronomers. They were probably from Babylon; and they had seen this new star in the sky; and believed that the appearance of a new star was connected with the divine event of a new king for the Jewish people.

Whose God was the God of the heavens and the earth, so they set off on this long journey to find this heavenly announced king. I want you to notice that the sacrifice entailed in that search was great.

- a) There was the sacrifice of the journey itself...
- b) There was the sacrifice of the gifts they brought to give...

Bottom line: **This cost them!** Here is the question: What are you willing to sacrifice? What are you willing to give to Jesus so that you can encounter him this year? Christmas is an expensive season. Anyone want to hazard a guess as to how much Americans will spend this Christmas? The National Retail Federation says total holiday retail sales are expected to exceed \$457.4 billion. (a 5% increase) (Purchases with credit cards: \$135 billion) We are more than willing to make the sacrifice for the season...but what are we willing to sacrifice to encounter the real treasure of the season? Better question: How much have you sacrificed so far this Christmas to encounter the real treasure of the season?

5) The hunt for the treasure of the season is also going to take a **realized** change.

Mt. 2:12, *"And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route."* (Mt 2:12) See those last three words: "by another route"...these are the words that close the Christmas story in Mt, "by another route." Why close with these words? It is because anyone who truly encounters the real treasure of the season will inevitably be different because of it. When you really discover the treasure, you will go home a different way! These wise men went home wiser men. **They had come looking for a political king; they went home having found a spiritual king.** They allowed him to be their king and their Lord. That was a real change; that took a real change. **They had come looking for direction through others; they went home having found direct access to God.** They started off asking direction from others: Herod's chief priests and teachers of the law; they ended up getting their direction directly from God: He warned them in a dream. They went home with a fresh encounter and a fresh revelation and a fresh transformation.

If we expect to discover the real treasure of the season, then we must be willing to hunt with a willingness to change and be changed because of that encounter. So let me give you a couple of suggestions:

- a) If you want to encounter Jesus but not be changed this Christmas, then don't look for him.
- b) If you want to encounter Jesus but not have him "warn" you about something in your spiritual life, then don't look for him.

The wise men went home wiser having encountered Jesus in a fresh and real way because they were willing to change. What about you? **Your likelihood of a fresh encounter with Jesus this season is directly related to your willingness to be changed by that encounter this season.** The wise men went home wiser having encountered Jesus in a fresh and real way because they were willing to change. What about you? *As the story goes, an elderly man was on his way to the mall to do his Christmas shopping. As he reached the door of the mall, a frog called out to him from the bushes, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess."*

*The man bent over, picked up the frog and put it in his pocket. The frog spoke up again and said, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I will stay with you for one week." The elderly took the frog out of his pocket, smiled at it, and returned it to the pocket.*

*The frog then cried out, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a princess, I'll stay with you and do anything you want." Again the elderly man took the frog out, smiled at it, and put it back into his pocket.*

*Finally, the frog asked, "What is the matter? I've told you I'm a beautiful princess, that I'll stay with you for a week and do anything you want. Why won't you kiss me?"*

*The elderly said, "Look, I'm an old man. I don't have the energy for a girlfriend, but a talking frog, now that's cool."*

You will never discover the real treasure of the season if you fail to hunt for that treasure. **Are you willing to do what it takes to hunt for that treasure this season?**

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Sunday December 11, 2011 - am

- 1) The Map of the Treasure – Matthew 1:23
- 2) The Location of the Treasure - Luke 2:7
- 3) The Hunt for the Treasure – Matthew 2:1-12

Basic requirements for treasure hunting:

- 1) It takes a \_\_\_\_\_ openness

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- 2) It takes a \_\_\_\_\_ risk

*When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel." Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." (Mt 2:3-8)*

- 3) It takes a \_\_\_\_\_ persistence.

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. (Mt 2:9-10)*

- 4) It takes a \_\_\_\_\_ sacrifice.

*On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. (Mt 2:11)*

- 5) It takes a \_\_\_\_\_ change.

*And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. (Mt 2:12)*

Your \_\_\_\_\_ of a fresh encounter with Jesus this season is directly \_\_\_\_\_ to your willingness to be changed by that encounter this season.

What are you willing to do to hunt for the treasure?