

January 4 Worship
Greeters- Nancy, Carl Flinkstrom
Reader- Carl Flinkstrom

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”* Matthew 6:33

Opening Scripture- Psalm 84:1-8(page 512)

Opening Chorus- 538- Lord, Be Glorified

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: A new day has dawned, a new year begun.

People: O Lord, call us so we may hear Your voice.

Leader: The world turns to hopes and dreams of the future.

People: O Lord, keep us in Your ways and on Your path.

Leader: We enter this new year with hope and excitement.

People: O Lord, remind us that You lead us.

All: O Lord, guide us as we look to You, and worship You. Amen.

Hymn of Praise- 164- We Three Kings(vs 1,5)

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- Gracious God, you have promised to make all things new: restore peace where there has been hatred, reduce tension where there has been anger, rekindle friendship where there has been enmity, relieve suffering where there has been violence and recreate a united nation; for the good of the people and for the peace of the world. In Christ's name, who taught us to pray, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Jeremiah 31:7-9(page 679)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 2:1-12(page 835-836)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 3- Come Thou Almighty King

New Testament Scripture- Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19(page 1017)

Message

“Are We Seekers Or Searchers?”

Even though Christmas is past, we still have certain days that commemorate the birth of Jesus. This Tuesday, January 6th, is called “Epiphany” in the Christian Church. It observes the day when the “Magi,” or 3 Wise Men arrived to find the foretold Messiah in Bethlehem. This is considered to be the introduction of Jesus to gentiles or non-Jewish population. We all know the story of the gifts and King Herod's connection, but just what were the Magi doing there anyway? They were chasing down the prophesy of a new king of the Jews being born. He was not only supposed to be the “King of the Jews,” He was said to be the Savior of all humanity. When they found Him, they agreed that this must be the child and they had found Him. Were the Magi searching for or seeking Jesus?

We use these words, seek and search, as if they mean pretty much the same thing but there is a difference. What is the difference? Searching and seeking are both actions that involve looking for something, but they differ in their intensity and purpose. Searching implies a more focused and deliberate effort to find something specific, while seeking is a broader and more open-ended quest for knowledge, understanding, or fulfillment. Searching often involves using specific tools or methods to locate an object or piece of information, while seeking is more about exploring and discovering new ideas or experiences. In essence, searching is like looking for a needle in a haystack, while seeking is more like embarking on a journey of self-discovery.

I think that most of us spend a good part of our lives searching for certain things. Prosperity, personal happiness, health, job satisfaction, and on and on. Many times, we are so busy searching that we don't realize when we have found whatever it is we are looking for and pass right by it. How many times have we searched for

something we have misplaced and looked right at it several times before discovering that it was right there where we put it? We also can spend much valued time and energy searching for what is right there in front of us. It is also possible that we waste our efforts searching for things that we perceive are better than what we already have.

I tend to believe that the 3 Wise men, or Magi, were searching for Jesus rather than seeking Him. They were attempting to find that which was prophesied just to prove that it was so. The orders that Herod gave them were to “Go and search diligently for the child.” (Matthew 2:8) It seems that the Magi's interest, as well as Herod's, was in the child as fulfillment of prophecy rather than as someone they needed to know. Isn't this kind of like all of us? We search for this person called Jesus for years without ever bothering to invest the time and energy that it takes to get to know Him. If you think about it, we don't need to search for Jesus at all, He is right here beside us since the day we were born.

Seeking the Lord means seeking his presence. “Presence” is a common translation of the Hebrew word “face.” Literally, we are to seek his “face.” But this is the Hebraic way of having access to God. To be before his face is to be in his presence. But aren't we, his children, always in his presence? Yes and no. Yes, in two senses: First, in the sense that God is omnipresent and therefore always near everything and everyone. He holds everything in being. His power is ever-present in sustaining and governing all things. And second, yes, he is always present with his children in the sense of his covenant commitment to always stand by us and work for us and turn everything for our good. “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

But there is a sense in which God's presence is not with us always. For this reason, the Bible repeatedly calls us to “seek the Lord,” seek his presence continually” (Psalm 105:4). God's manifest, conscious, trusted presence is not our constant experience. There are seasons when we become neglectful of God and give him no thought and do not put trust in him and we find him “unmanifested,” that is, unperceived as great and beautiful and valuable by the eyes of our hearts. His face, the brightness of his personal character, is hidden behind the curtain of our personal and physical desires. This condition is always ready to overtake us. That is why we are told to “seek his presence continually.” God calls us to enjoy continual consciousness of his supreme greatness and beauty and worth.

This happens through “seeking.” Continual seeking. But what does that mean practically? Both the Old and New Testaments say it is a “setting of the mind and heart” on God. It is the conscious fixing or focusing of our mind's attention and our heart's affection on God. “Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God.” (1 Chronicles 22:19) “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that

are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1–2) This setting of the mind is the opposite of mental coasting. It is a conscious choice to direct the heart toward God. This is what Paul prays for the church: “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ” (2 Thessalonians 3:5). It is a conscious effort on our part. But that effort to seek God is a gift from God.

We do not make this mental and emotional effort to seek God because he is lost. That’s why we would seek a coin or a sheep. But God is not lost. Nevertheless, there is always something through which or around which we must go to meet him consciously. This going through or around is what seeking is. He is often hidden. Veiled. We must go through mediators and around obstacles. The heavens are telling the glory of God. So, we can seek him through that. He reveals himself in his word. So, we can seek him through that. He shows himself to us in the evidences of grace in other people. So, we can seek him through that. The seeking is the conscious effort to get through the natural means to God himself, to constantly set our minds toward God in all our experiences, to direct our minds and hearts toward him through the means of his revelation. This is what seeking God means.

The great obstacle to seeking the Lord is pride. “In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him” (Psalm 10:4). Therefore, humility is essential to seeking the Lord. The great promise to those who seek the Lord is that he will be found. “If you seek him, he will be found by you” (1 Chronicles 28:9). And when he is found, there is great reward. “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). God himself is our greatest reward. And when we have him, we have everything. Therefore, “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (Psalm 105:4). Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- In the stillness, in the silence, we attend to your presence, our God. And we feel you filling us from within, illuminating our minds, warming our hearts, stirring our spirits, strengthening our hands outstretched, transforming our lives, energizing our lives, until every fiber of our being is filled with your presence, and we leap up crying, Blessed are you, God of all life! Blessed are you who rejoices in our worship. Blessed are you who attends to the cry of the poor. Blessed are you who offers hope in the hard times. Blessed are you, our God whose name is love, whose presence is light, whose heart is justice, whose gift is grace, whose life is hope. Let our whole being resonate in praise to you. Let every aspect of our lives show that we live for you. Praise be to you, our God, for ever and ever. In Jesus name. Amen.

Communion Hymn- 376- A Hymn of Joy We Sing

Thanksgiving Prayer- Dear God, In the stillness after Holy Communion, we rest in the peace that only You can give. Thank You for calming the storms within us and quieting the noise of the world. Let this peace abide in our hearts, radiate in our lives, and touch those around us. You are our refuge and strength, and in You, we find serenity. May the gift of this sacrament continue to renew our souls with holy tranquility. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 362- There's A Wideness in God's Mercy

Benediction- Go in peace, love and care for one another in Christ's name, Go in the confidence of people who have found mercy through him, keeping the commandments and letting go of all that binds you to the ways of this world, And may God come close to you and keep you safe; may Christ Jesus reward your faithfulness a hundredfold; and may the Holy Spirit be your help in time of need. both now and forevermore. Amen.