

Do you ever have a hard time seeing things? Do you just ever have a hard time figuring things out?

Occasionally in our house, we will have a crossword puzzle going on a card-table. I kind of like crossword puzzles. I tend to think in pictures and spatially, so puzzles work out well for me.

I remember once when we had the crossword puzzle up and going in our house that I had been working on it. I had a piece in my hand and I was looking and looking for just the right spot that it would fit. But I couldn't find it.

Debbie came walking up, she looked at the piece in my hand and she said, "It goes here." I looked and looked and just couldn't see what she saw.

So she took the piece and placed it in its spot. And she was right, it fit.

I was having a hard time seeing it. I needed help to figure it out. Debbie provided the help I needed in that moment, to see just where that puzzle piece fit. Do you ever have a hard time seeing things? Do you ever just need help to figure things out?

Today, we are continuing our sermon series called *Looking for Hope*. We are looking at several characters in the Christmas story to see how they were looking for hope or found hope to see if that can help us in our quest to find hope and meaning in life.

What I know is that many of us are looking for hope. We are looking for meaning in life. We just need help, and we don't always know where to turn.

So far, we have looked at Zachariah and how he was looking for hope and meaning through work. He discovered that God came to

him there. We have looked at Mary and discovered that she discovered hope and meaning through obeying, through having a willing heart for God. Today, we are going to look at the Wise men.

They needed help. They were astrologers. They had come from the east. They studied the skies and looked for deeper meaning in events.

They had seen a star in the East. They knew that that star had indicated that a King was born in the world. They looked and they searched and decided that this meant a King had been born for Israel. So they came to Israel to search for this new born King.

And when you are searching for a new King to be born, in a world where there is not upward mobility, where do you search?

You expect to find a new born King, in the home of the present King.

Can you imagine how surprised they must have been to discover that the new King was not there? They were probably just about as surprised as the present King was to hear that a new King had been born and he had not been informed about it.

This is where, for me anyway, the story gets interesting. Because when the wise men discover the new King is not in the home of the old King, they ask for direction. "Well, where is the new King to be born for the Jews?"

A search is done and Bethlehem is the place. And off they go.

Sometimes, when we are stuck in life, we just need to stop and ask for direction. Sometimes, when life isn't going the way we plan, we need to stop and ask for direction. Sometimes, when we are searching for hope, we need to stop and ask for direction. That is

what the wise men did. And it made a difference. And it can make a difference for us as well.

Because you see, so often we think we can just make it on our own, by ourself. That is what our culture tells us to do. But our faith reminds us that we don't have to live on our own, by ourselves. In fact, to not ask for help from others or from God, holds us back.

Margaret discovered this. When she arrived at the nursing home, she was introduced to the people of her new home. She enjoyed meeting people. She had agreed with her family that the best place for her, following her stroke was in the nursing home. But there would be so many things that she would miss about her own home. Yet she tried to make the best of it.

When she got to the community room, she looked longingly at the piano.

"Is there anything wrong?" asked Millie, the staff member.

"No," Margaret said softly. "It's just that seeing a piano brings back memories. Before my stroke, music was everything to me." Millie glanced at Margaret's useless right hand as the black woman quietly told some of the highlights of her music career.

Suddenly Millie said, "Wait right here. I'll be back in a minute." She returned moments later, followed closely by a small, white-haired woman in thick glasses. The woman used a walker.

"Margaret, meet Ruth," said Millie. Then she smiled and said, "She too played the piano, but like you, she's not been able to play since her stroke. Ruth has a good right hand, and you have a good left, and I have a feeling that together, you two can do something wonderful."

"Do you know Chopin's Waltz in D flat?" Ruth asked. Margaret nodded.

Side by side, the two sat on the piano bench. Two healthy hands - one with long, graceful black fingers, the other with short, plump white ones - moved rhythmically across the black and white keys. Since that day, they have sat together over the keyboard hundreds of times - Margaret's helpless right hand around Ruth's back, Ruth's helpless left hand on Margaret's knee, while Ruth's good hand plays the melody and Margaret's good hand plays the accompaniment.

Their music has pleased audiences on television, at churches and schools, and at rehabilitation and senior citizen centers. Sharing the piano bench, Ruth heard Margaret say, "My music was taken away from me, but God gave me Ruth."

Sometimes we need others to help us move into a new way, to live a better way. Are you willing to turn to God? Are you willing to see out help when you get stuck?

May God help us turn to God and to others when we need to.

In the hope God offers us.

Amen