

# FAITH

O

I have yet to see the “Northern Lights” during my time here in the Flathead. I suspect that this is in part due to the low cloud cover that we sometimes receive here on the west shore but I must confess that I’m eager to see it. I’ve never lived in a latitude far enough north to be able to glimpse this phenomenon. There is just something about the northern lights that is calling to me. Do you have things like that? Do you have some part, some aspect of living that calls out to you to experience it, even if you have already seen or experienced it before?

R

The season of Epiphany is meant to be like that. Epiphany is an ancient Greek word meaning “manifestation” or “striking appearance.” The church has used it for thousands of years to describe the season immediately after Christmas which begins with the visit of the wise-men in Bethlehem to see “the place where the child was.” For many it is simply a season of the star, the star reported to have drawn the wisemen to baby Jesus. During this period of Epiphany we are to long for the star shining light in the world so that we might better follow and grow with Jesus.

U

M

And there lies the rub. Following and growing with Jesus is a pretty hard thing to do. If we look to the early disciples they were invited to leave everything and follow him. How many of us are willing to leave our jobs, our careers, our cars, our families behind in such a pursuit? Growing with this Jesus means listening to his difficult words like “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” How many of us live this reality out on a daily basis doing all we can to be that sign of blessing to the poor?

The church of today receives a lot of criticism about this very thing, much of it deserved. The world outside the walls of Sunday morning gatherings wonders why it is that we express so much anger and condemnation toward those around us rather than humbly devoting ourselves to the task of growing with this One that welcomed all to be fed. The world wonders why many of us live so well while the One we follow never had a bed to call home.

So what to do?

What if we put the same effort into following and growing with our Lord and Savior as we put into questing after things like the northern lights? What if we sought to feed the world, care for the poor, walk with those who are broken as much as we sought to drive the right car, live in the right house, build a better life for ourselves? Might the world then see something of the Savior we claim to follow?

These are tough questions and the pursuit of answering them can be even tougher. However, if we are to follow the star that shed light on the manger and revealed the Light of the world then we cannot just stay where things are comfortable.

I’d really like to see the northern lights and hope that one day I will. But I’d much rather have my neighbor be fed and see God’s love become real in their life.