

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!
I LOOK FORWARD TO NEW YEAR WHEN WE CAN AGAIN WORSHIP
TOGETHER AS A CHURCH FAMILY AND GO ABOUT SERVING GOD AS
HE HAS INSTRUCTED US TO DO.
BLESSINGS TO ALL!**

Rise Up And Follow The Star

Scripture: [Matthew 2:1-13](#)

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

***6 ““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 shepherd my people Israel.”^[b]”***

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ 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, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

This is the word of our Lord!

A family was driving to a family get-together for a Christmas celebration.

(Something we have not been able to do this year!!!!)

As they passed by the Anglican church there was a manger scene in the yard. The youngest boy asked his mother, "What is that?"

"Honey, that is Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus, lying in the manger,"

A few blocks further on they passed the Methodist church, there was a scene depicting the journey of the Wise Men.

"Who are they?" the young boy asked.

"Those are the Wise Men, they are looking for the Baby Jesus."

"Well, they're not all that wise" the young boy replied, "they won't find Him there. He's down the street at that Anglican church."

The annual observance of the birth of our Saviour is almost over.

Epiphany is commemorated on January 6th and it ends the liturgical celebration of the "Twelve Days of Christmas."

There are no gifts of turtle doves, French hens or a partridge in a pear tree.

Rather we celebrate the biblical gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

When you look at a manger scene, what do you normally see?

There is Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus.

And gathered around the manger, you see cows and sheep and shepherds.

But who else is usually standing near the manger? The Wise men.

But when the wise men arrive, where do the scriptures state that Mary and Joseph are living? (Matthew 2:11)

That's right, Joseph, Mary and Jesus are in a HOUSE

"On entering the house, ... they saw the child with Mary his mother,and they knelt down and paid him homage..." Matthew 2:11

From other information that we find in the Gospel of Matthew, it appears that Jesus must have been a toddler when the Wise men came to offer their gifts.

Possibly, He was a two-year-old. Clearly, He was no longer lying in the manger.

They have found a house to live in, and Joseph most likely has set up shop as a local carpenter in the town of Bethlehem.

1 ½ to 2 ½ years have probably transpired since the birth of the Christ Child.

The shepherds came some time ago and the scriptures are silent as to anyone else coming to visit since his birth.

Now enter the Wise Men.

Some scholars speculate it might have taken these Wise men up to 4 months to make the journey to Jerusalem not including their time of preparation.

And theirs was not a "safe" journey.

Much of the way would have been unprotected. Thieves and robbers plagued many of the roads and forced merchants and commoners to travel in large caravans, for safety.

But these were neither commoners nor merchants.

They were prominent men.

It has been speculated that "at a minimum, they would have brought with them a full military escort along with their servants.

The total party could have amounted to more than 300 people."

That would have explained the stir they caused when they rode into Jerusalem.

To have 300 people walk into Jerusalem, a caravan of obvious importance would have caught the attention of the entire city.

And the fact that these wise men had no trouble gaining an audience with King Herod gives us an in-sight that these were men of prominence and of power.

So, we are clearly looking at more than just 3 guys out for a ride on their camels.

This was a large band of men who had travelled a great distance over dangerous roads.

Just to prepare for their journey would have taken months.

That is why most scholars believe these wise men did not arrive for approximately 2 years after Jesus birth.

Many legends have grown up around the story of these Wise men; one of which is that they were " 3 kings."

The idea of Three Kings was to correspond to the 3 gifts that were given to the Christ child; one gift from each King.

The truth is we really do not know how many there were or who they are.

Were they really kings? Probably not.

Matthew calls them "Wise men from the East."

The Greek term is MAGOI (MAH-goy) which is where we receive the title MAGI.

They were probably astrologers which explains why they would have noticed and then been so enthralled about finding this unusual star in the sky.

As they would later say to Herod,

"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."

The idea that heavenly signs marked the births and deaths of great leaders was widely accepted in the Eastern culture.

What these Magi saw intrigued them. It excited them enough to leave their homeland and to follow the star.

They were probably from Babylon and it was going to be a very long journey to the town of Bethlehem.

For these Wise men, this was the most important journey they would ever take.

Nobody. No one. Nothing was going to stand between them and following that star.

These Magi made a dramatic commitment of time to search for this New King.

The gift of time is one of the most precious gifts that we can give to our Lord.

When the Wise men of old came to find Jesus in Bethlehem they focused not on themselves and not on what they could receive but on what they could give; what they could give to this King.

And the first thing they gave Him was time.

How could one not find the time for the One they call their King, their Lord and Saviour?

Wise men and wise women still seek Him.

Those who call themselves followers of the Christ find time and make time to be with their King.

There is a wonderful message from these Wise men for us.

First, these three or however many Magi met God in the midst of their daily work.

They were at their work when God gave them a sign.

God *is not* limited to meeting with us in a certain place or at a certain hour.

God can and God does speak to us anywhere and at any time.

The message for us is to be constantly prepared. To be constantly alert for what God has prepared for us or what God has in store for us.

So, the first message is: to make time, to spend time with the Lord. God will meet you in your daily life. Be alert.

And the second, have a willingness, a willingness in your heart to take action.

Those Wise Men could have noted the appearance of the star in their charts and done nothing more.

They could have indicated that this phenomenon probably heralded something very special, and then gone back to their normal lives. Yet they did not!

They put commitment to their conviction. They put feet to their faith and commenced to follow.

When God presents us with a new opportunity, are we willing to get up and put feet to our faith?

The Message of the Wise Men should enlighten us that there is something special, something remarkable that awaits us at the end of the journey.

One of the things that has intrigued me about this account is the incredible wrong turn these Wise Men took as they neared the end of their journey.

Instead of following the star to Bethlehem, they stopped in Jerusalem to ask directions which has caused some to suggest that this is why these magi are so famous.

They are the only men in history known to stop to ask for directions. (HA HA)

Yet, in a way, the visit with Herod might be expected.

After all, they were on a journey to welcome a new "King of the Jews," presumably, Herod's newborn son.

They questioned Herod at his court.

"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?"

Herod calls on the Chief Priests and the Scribes and where did they look for the answer?

The Scriptures!

As corrupt as Herod's administration was, they knew where the truth could be found.

"In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet."

So, it has been written these Wise men found the truth. They found their way when they received insight from the Scriptures.

So, what is God calling us to do as His people?

We don't need to guess.

The answers are found in the pages of Scripture.

The Scriptures were clear, and the Magi were back on course.

When you are lost, when you feel far away from God, turn to His word and He will lead you back on course.

The Magi found Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea and they laid before Him their gifts and they worshiped him.

There is a lesson for us in the gifts that were given.

In fact, it would appear that God Himself had inspired their offerings:

The gold, presented to the infant King, represented His royalty.

Frankincense, an expensive resin, that was burned in the temple as a symbol of prayer, spoke of His divinity.

And Myrrh, another expensive resin that was used in embalming, representing His death; His death for us.

These were gifts given with care and in adoration of this newborn King.

But as religious as their gifts were they had a practical value that the Magi may not have even realized.

Hear God's word.

"When (the Wise men) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and His mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill Him.'"

Matthew 2:13

How would Mary, Joseph and their baby child survive in a foreign country with no family, no immediate source of income?

How? They have gold. They have frankincense and they have myrrh.

Gifts of great value.

A currency accepted throughout the known world.

Just like the Magi, we need to be ready. Be alert to meet God in the midst of our everyday life, and then rise up and follow the star.

What you believe should determine *how* you behave.

We must be willing to put commitment to our conviction and be willing to put feet on our faith; then rise up and follow the star;

Scripture is God's living word; your resource to know God's direction for our life. Let His word permeate our very being.

Then, rise up and follow the star.

Where is the light of that star leading us?

Once we come into the true presence of Jesus, it changes everything.

Take time.

Find time.

Make time for the one we call our Saviour and our Lord; for Wise men and Wise women still seek him.

We must be open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit that resides within our very being.

We must prepare our heart to encounter the risen Lord and prepare our heart for action. Then, rise up rise up and follow the star!

Rise up and follow the One we call our Saviour and our Lord.

Rise up and follow Jesus.

Amen!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father we thank you for the gift of Your son. Help us to place commitment to our conviction. Help us to place feet to our faith; to be as the Magi, the wise men and to rise up and follow the star and to rise up and follow Your Son. Loving God, in a world of sin; a world of violence, Christ was born to save. He brings peace and joy to the lives of those who recognize him and follow Him. And at the end, his kingdom will never fail. We give you thanks, O God, that His ways are not the ways of earthly rulers and that His rule is not one of oppression and of violence, but of truth and love.

Most loving God, as you put it into the mind of the Wise Men to search for Jesus, please give to us the wisdom to seek and to find the God of Love, and the Lord of Light.

When we become proud and stubborn, give us the wisdom to find our humble Lord, born in a stable.

When we become bewildered and lost in life's rush, give us the wisdom to find ourselves in the light that streams from Bethlehem.

When we become selfish and covetous, cluttering our lives with possessions, give us the wisdom to find that the best joy, lies in offering our treasures to Christ.

When we become depressed by our human failures and sin, give us the wisdom to find the divine compassion, mercy, and forgiveness that Jesus came to bring and to live as children of light rather than as children of darkness.

Father God hear our prayers for our rulers and for the rulers of the nations of this world that they may rule with justice and with truth and love and dwell together in peace.

Caring God, as we recall the events surrounding the birth of Jesus today, hear our prayers for the children who are killed by men and women of evil even today. Hear too our prayers for those like Joseph and Mary who must flee their homes and live in foreign lands; and our prayers for those who hunger and thirst while the rich buy weapons of war and gather possessions that serve only their own purposes.

We pray to You and we give You thanks, O Lord, through Your beloved child, Jesus, whom You have revealed to the whole world as Saviour and Redeemer.

We thank You for how He has overcome the darkness of this world and brought to us a lasting hope and an eternal joy. May His light shine through Your people in this place and His peace and love be known and accepted by all.

We ask it in His name; the One who gave His life for all of us.

Amen

BENEDICTION

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Jesus, and as this new year commences and continues, may the light of God surround you; the love of Jesus draw you closer to Himself, and the power of the Spirit strengthen you and grant you joy,

both now and for evermore. **Amen.**