

#8 15-16

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

Opening Our Treasure Chests

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

This is the word of our Lord . . .

So, 4 days ago, on January 6th, it was officially Epiphany ~ the last day of Christmas for some, the first for others. It is the day which Christian Church Forefathers have set aside to commemorate the 3 Wise gentiles/foreigners who are said to have used their scientific knowledge and their great desire for the hope of a savior for the world and with all of that, they discovered Jesus, the Baby in the manger in the animal stall. It is a day of revelation to the gentiles, of respect for science, and of courage in the face of political civil disobedience.

The story goes, that these men trusted their understanding of the astronomical heavens, and understood the signs in the skies to be of spiritual and earthly importance. These men were not Jews, they were men of science from far away, and the knowledge they gathered together led them to seek this newly born King of this tribe of people who believed in the one God. These people were not in power, but the idea that the Jews could possibly become powerful again frightened the ruling class in that area.

I wonder why that was. It is as if Herod and the others mentioned felt that if the Jews were to have a King, something horrible would happen to them. I guess that is what comes when your life is focused primarily on political power and not on spiritual gains ~ you are terrified of the unknown and any changes in the daily routines. Even some of the Jewish leaders were said to have been worried. Perhaps they, too, were more invested in maintaining what they knew than in the promises of God?

But these learned foreigners set out to discover the unknown, to live the adventure of trusting in the universe and seeing what it unfolded to them! And they arrived at the manger, having followed the light of revelations - the Star - the enlightenment - and they came to an Epiphany! It was revealed to them that the King they sought had nothing to do with political power - but the power of simplicity. The science they trusted brought them to a simple place where paradise had been restored. Man lay down with animals, and angels and shepherds came to this humble place and recognized it as holy.

So these men, who sought a King, found human and earth united at one place. The animals, the heavens, the spiritual beings, the humans, all who were focused on trusting God alone, and not trusting alone in the rule of man, were here at this birth of Jesus. And they knew they were at the right place. So they left the gifts that they had brought for the King.

The gifts were symbols of the adventure they were on! Gold for the riches, Frankincense incense for the sacred aspects of their journey, and Myrrh is a scent associated with many things, but often had been used for embalming and many believe it symbolized Jesus' death ~ eternity ~ the sacred time of God.

Death was already playing a part in the adventures of these men! They seemed to know that Herod had something nefarious in mind, and they chose to protect that which was sacred and wise and the culmination of much of their being, by leaving and not returning to tell King Herod where this baby was.

These men sought the King of the tribes of Israel - those chosen ones of the one God. The 3 wise men used their wisdom to find this King. They totally uprooted their lives and risked an adventure into the unknown. They gave their material gifts, their spiritual gifts, their intellectual gifts, and they did all they could to protect this spiritual adventure they had been called into.

On this day of Installation and blessing of the leaders of this church, we are being asked to consecrate our lives once again to be like these men. We are called to offer our lives to this adventure of following the star of faith in God, to offer our gifts, material, spiritual, emotional, communal, and intellectual. We are called to do all we can to protect this body of Christ from all that might harm it. We are asked to open our treasure chests which is in each one of us, and to go on the adventure of 2016 together seeking our mission to this community. What is in our treasure chests? This we will find out as we travel in faith. Some gifts we know we have already, others may surprise us.

And there are some things we can count on. We can count on Christ leading us on this adventure. We have his teachings, and his revelations to each of us in some special personal way. We have his promise that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. We have the saints who have gone before us and all those who still treasure this lighthouse of God's love. We have the promises that we will never be alone.

And what are we called to do? All that we can. Not to worry. Love one another. Serve one another. Open our treasure chests of all we have to contribute and to be generous in spirit. And to seek the spirit of God in all we do. This is what we have been called to do in 2016. And God is always with us. AMEN