

## **“Looking High and Low “**

**Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 1-04-09**

The story of the quest of the three wise men is a wonderful tale. We love the legend of a star shining brightly in the heavens acting as a GPS as they traveled both day and night for a long time. Some think even as long as two years. Jesus would have been a toddler by the time they arrived.

Those three kings, or three wise men, or three astrologers had been looking high and low for a sign of the coming of the messiah long before the star they hoped for made its appearance. Our Advent season, our time of waiting, is a mere dot on the timeline of life when we consider the centuries a messiah was waited for—the one who would bring peace and comfort and hope for the future. At last those who scanned the heavens saw a bright light and they knew the time had come for them to find the person the light heralded. The story we have in Matthew—the only gospel in which it is recorded--tells us of their journey and of their meeting with Herod and of their discovery of the child.

Of course, this part of the story helps satisfy the prophecy we read in Isaiah--a prophecy which noted two of the gifts the wise men were to bring—gold and frankincense. The importance of the story goes far beyond the gifts. The arrival of these three people from far away underlines the fact that the message that Christ brought was for all, not just for the nation Israel. Returning to their lands, by another way, out of the reach of Herod, ensured that the message would have safe passage back to their countries where the seeds of this future new faith could be planted and nourished. It tells us that we are not the only ones who have a corner on the good news, that it does belong to the entire world. It is a message we are meant to continue to deliver to others in thought and word and deed.

The finding of Jesus was an epiphany, with a small “e,” meaning “the sudden realization or comprehension of the essence or meaning of something.” This small “e” discovery led to our Christian celebration of Epiphany, on January 6, which notes the coming of the wise men ,not only to find the Christ child, but to give credence to the fact that this person was a person for all times and places.

We, as Christians, believe that Jesus came along to help us discover that the life he led was the one God had in mind for all of us. Jesus, in his walk with God, revealed the nature of God to us and gave us guidance for living similar lives. We can choose to decide whether we will follow him or not. If we do, it is because we have had an epiphany within ourselves and we finally know what is important in life and where our focus should be. We finally have a deep understanding of what it means to be followers of Christ. It is a deep down sense that we want to continue to reveal the nature of God to those around us. We finally have eyes to see and ears to hear and brains to process the message that came to us so long ago.

Deciding to become more Christ-like is not an easy task. Most of us are content where we are in life. To become true followers requires that we change; it means that we need to live fully in the present moment becoming more conscious of the way we deal with other people. Following Jesus means that we live lives of love, forgiveness, hope and joy. It means that we work and often struggle to understand others, withholding any judgment we may like to make. We have never walked in another person’s shoes, so it is not fair to feel that we are better than some one else because our lives seem to be better. Everyone has at least one cross to bear and we do not always know exactly what that is, even for our closest friends. Becoming true disciples means that we set ourselves aside in service to others.

This is a new year, a time for new ways of living and moving and having our beings. Epiphany or Twelfth Night is on Tuesday, it offers us a window of opportunity to pause and reflect upon those wise men and to discover why that journey was so important to them and to the entire world. Then we need to depart on journeys of our own. Journeys that take us into our hearts and souls and minds and that lead us into becoming the people God has always wanted us to be.

*-- Amen*

