

Epiphany  
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## “Called to be Christ”

Today the Sunday closest to the Feast of the Epiphany is the day we choose to celebrate that great feast. You have to admit that the story of the Wiseman, Kings or Magi, is a very strange story to find in the New Testament. Other Gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas or James are thrown out of the Canon of the New Testament, precisely because they contain fanciful or magical stories.

Yet Matthew’s Gospel, with the story of the 3 Kings, survives in Chapter 2: Verse 1. Every year at Epiphany we get to marvel at the faith of these men, who came seeking a special birth, searching for a Messiah, following a star.

Today there is a sense in which many people are searching for a star, seeking a sign, looking for something that will make a bleak future look brighter. Yet, even in our harsh economic climate, we have to admit; that Israel in the time of Matthew’s writing was so much worse.

Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Roman legends, in 70AD, and with it the Great Temple. Masada the Palace of Herod, had fallen and the very future of Judaism was now at stake.

Jews and Christians were looking for a way out of the foggy gloom of war torn days. They were searching for the meaning that old religion had given to their lives. Now all of that had been taken away and in their loss and despair they did not know which way to turn for the best.

Matthew’s story of the Wise men, tells them what to do and where to turn. The answer is contained right there between the lines of Matthew Chapter 2. “Follow the Star the words of the prophets handed down from of old. A savior has been born for you. Go and search diligently for the child.”

There is a deep sense, that the quest of the wise men is also our quest also. All our lives we search for that which will bring us happiness, fulfillment and contentment. Too often that quest sends us down false roads; ambition, career, wealth, possessions or recognition and even love. In time all fade; Matthew’s Gospel is determined to give its reader a new answer namely that Jesus Christ and its teaching are the way, the truth and the life.

Was it Mahatma Gandhi who said: “Christianity and the teaching of Jesus have all the answers it just hasn’t been tried yet?”

2009 could be the year that we resolve to bring Christ into our lives. Even if we have said that in precious years, perhaps this year it has more poignancy for many of us.

Can you imagine if we spent 2009 treating our seniors, parents and grandparents with that reverence we know Jesus would have given them? Or see in the care and love we give our children each day, the nurturing voice of Jesus for each one of them. “Why do you expect children to be perfect?” An old teacher once told me. “They are not perfect. They are in a process of becoming. They are becoming the full person God has destined them to be.” It is our jobs to be Christ for them in their young lives, no matter how hard or how difficult that can be at times. That is our calling that is our discipleship. How else will they learn of the loving savior, who we once were introduced to all those years ago? The truth is that Jesus is hard to find on the Internet, CBS or even at the movies. Yet, Jesus is often carried to children in the stories grandparents tell and in the time and love they share with the young. The wise men can come all year round; especially when there is baby sitting to be done.

And you and I, how are we going to find Christ Jesus in the coming year? How indeed? We have all heard the lament of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “I have no time. I would like to volunteer, but I can’t, I have no time. There is too much pressure, too much work, too much to do. I have no time.”

And yet we are all Christians for one reason; we believe in Jesus Christ. We are all baptized and committed members of his church for one reason; we have agreed that *his mission is our mission*. We all know deep in our hearts that we are called to be like him for others, who do not know him but need him. Imagine if in 2009 we could do precisely that; believe in Christ; make his mission our mission, and be Christ for other people.

I guarantee you, that if we had ten people who truly believed in Christ, fulfilled his mission and where ten Christ’s in the community, the results would be so astounding that we would be building Episcopal churches in Shohola, Dingman’s and Lackawaxen.

For to believe in Christ is to stop long enough to get to know him. To believe in Jesus is to love him and make this teaching of love, forgiveness and repentance your own.

To adopt his mission is to work tirelessly to make his message known. It is to know that it is the Christ who is the Lord of your life and for whom you work and give of your time.

To be like Christ for others is to be a true brother or sister, a friend in time of need, a care giver, a healer of hurt, a finder of lost souls.

There will be no recent time in which Christ is more needed than in the months and year ahead. Whether it is to the sick among us, and there are many, or to the homeless, the poor, the unemployed or those without hope, the only voice of Christ they will hear will be our voice, the only face of Christ they will see will be our faces.

In the letter to the Ephesians today the writer reminds us: “that we have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

Because of the blessings that we have received we are commissioned to bring hope to others.

Can you imagine the journey that the 3 kings made back to their homelands? What a story they had to tell. At the same time, how their lives must have been transformed by the knowledge of what they had seen. They had seen the beginning of something wonderful come into the world that was destined to change the world.

As we go into this year of 2009, Jesus' words come to us and tell us: "I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

As we put away our candles and strip the church bare of our Christmas celebration we consecrate our church and our people today, that we may be Christ's people in 2009 and it be his light that we follow.

For all of us who are older, the light of Christ is important as we steer our way towards that kingdom and that final destination. Yet how important is it that day by day we teach our children about Jesus that he be their light too in finding the right path through life?

Believe in Christ, making his mission our mission being Christ for others let these be our resolutions as we move into this New Year. Then we will continue to be that Christian mission that God our Father called us here to be.

Amen+