

Opening Scripture

Isaiah 40:27-31

Opening Prayer

Scripture

Matthew 2:1-12

Message:

On the Church Calendar there are holidays and seasons that help us to follow the life and ministry of Jesus. If you have followed these video recordings, or joined us at our in-person Worship services, you have heard me talk about the seasons and holidays on the Church calendar. The season of Advent looks forward to and helps us prepare for the Christmas Holiday. The season of Lent looks forward to and helps us to remember the betrayal, sacrifice and death of Jesus. We have now entered the season of Epiphany. The season of Christmas begins on Dec. 25, and lasts 12 days and concludes on January 6, which is known as Epiphany. Today is the 1st Sunday after Epiphany – January 9 – so I want to spend a couple of minutes and talk about it. Epiphany means **MANIFESTATION**. It refers to an **Unveiling**. It means to **Cause to Appear, or to Bring to Light**. The event that is associated with Epiphany is the visit of the Magi. The day is sometimes referred to as “Three Kings Day.” With the visit of the visitors from the East, **God reveals His plan that Jesus came into the world for people of all nations**. God’s desire is that the world will see more of Christ’s glory.

There are actually 3 events from the early life and ministry of Jesus that reveal truth about Jesus.

- The visit of the Magi – **God brings to light the news that a new King had been born**. Herod and the Jewish leaders were completely unaware that God had sent a new King into the world
- The Baptism of Jesus – At the Baptism of Jesus as He comes up out of the water, a dove descends on Him and a Voice is heard from heaven declaring this is my Son. **God brings to light Jesus’ true identity**.
- The third event is the wedding in Cana, where Jesus turns the water into wine. **God brings to light that Jesus has great power**. His power is evidence that He is the promised Messiah.

I want to look at the visit of the Magi. In Matthew’s and Luke’s writings about the birth of Jesus, they both write about visitors who came to see the newborn Jesus. There are some similarities and lessons that we can learn from these two groups of visitors. We are familiar with the visit of the Shepherds. On the night that Jesus was born shepherds who were watching their sheep in the fields surrounding Bethlehem were visited by angels who announced to them that a Savior had been born. The shepherds responded to the news and **went to visit** the baby they had been told about.

The visitors that Matthew tells us about are known as Magi. Magi were men who pursued wisdom and served in royal courts. These particular **Magi spent time studying the movement of stars**. Early Biblical students referred to them as kings, which they were not. And their number was set at 3, probably because of the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that they brought to Jesus. As they studied the movement of the stars they became aware of a new star that they had not seen before. Astronomers and Astrologers believed that the stars revealed messages. These Magi had studied the Old Testament Scriptures and were familiar with a verse that mentions a star coming in the land of Israel to announce a new king. Their response was similar to the that of the Shepherds. They believed the message and went to find this new baby king. By the time they arrive, Matthew tells us that Mary and Joseph were living in a house, no longer in a stable. Their visit likely occurred much later than the birth, possibly up to 2 years later.

Both sets of visitors told others about their beliefs about this child. **The shepherds went back to their sheep and told everyone they met about this baby**. The **Magi talked about the baby before they met him**. They came to Jerusalem which was the capital of the Jewish territory and announced what had been revealed to them. They came to the palace, where they would have expected such an event to have taken place. They told Herod what they had heard about the baby. Herod then goes to the religious leaders and

teachers to find out what they knew about the birth of a new king. Herod as the story tells us seems to be interested in finding out more. Of course his interest was to eliminate the new threat to his throne. One of the saddest stories in scripture is the order by Herod to kill all of the male children 2 years and under in order to kill this baby king.

But I'm curious about the lack of interest on the part of the religious leaders. These were men who you would think should have been a bit curious about this news that God had sent a new King of the Jews. But they are completely indifferent to the news. They do not offer to go with the Magi to investigate. Their lack of interest indicates that they knew the Bible, but they did not know God or have a desire to worship and honor Him.

So there are similarities in the two groups who visit Jesus after His birth. Their desire was to Reveal or Manifest the truth about Jesus so that others might know Him as well. As we enter this season of Epiphany, that is a challenge that is stirring in my heart. How will I show others the glory of Jesus?

- By my lifestyle; would others who watch me know that I am a follower of Jesus?
- I want to be alert to opportunities in my daily interactions with others to mention the name of Jesus in a natural and interesting way
- Invite others to study one of the gospels to learn more about Jesus

I challenge you to use this season of Epiphany to look for opportunities to manifest the truth about Jesus to others