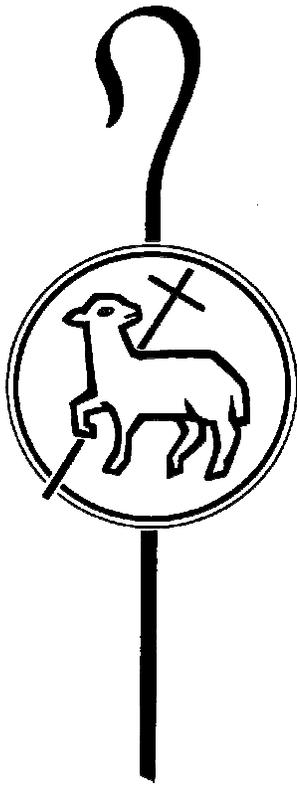


## feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading . (Isaiah 40:11)

December 18, 2012

Dearest family,



So we ended up having our candlelight service by daylight! Different ambiance but hopefully the same spirit of thanksgiving and worship. It's always lovely to have a packed church. Many thanks to those who participated in the service and all of you who attended. And weren't the kids terrific? You never know what you are going to get when you do things live but they never disappoint! Don't forget that we are holding a Christmas Candlelight Communion Service from 6-7p.m. on Saturday evening, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. **THERE IS NO SERVICE ON SUNDAY MORNING DECEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>.**

In the incarnation story, we have wise men coming to Jesus, bringing their treasures. How fascinating then is the perspective of Paul on Jesus in Colossians 2:3 when he describes Jesus as the one *"in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom."* It is Isaiah (33:6) who describes wisdom as a treasure. So the wise by this world's description, bring their worldly treasures to the one who is in fact the depository of all the spiritual treasures of wisdom. It's really interesting to me that the single most dominant description of Jesus in his formative years and in his early ministry is that he is "wise".

*"And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was on him...And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."* (Lk. 2: 40, 52) And when Jesus bursts onto the public scene, the folks in his hometown ask, *"Where did this man get this wisdom?"* (Mt. 13:54) Years later, Paul gives one of the best descriptions of Jesus to the Corinthians, who prided themselves on their intellectual acumen: *"Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God."* (1 Cor. 1:30)

You could argue that scripture is all about what it takes to be wise. Paul said to Timothy "the scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation." How much more so the scriptures that actually record what Jesus said wisdom was about. Did he not do that in the simplest and shortest of stories, like the parable of the two men who built their house on very different foundations? The wise guy, the one who built on rock, is the man who simply "hears these words of mine and puts them into practice."

I think the wise men of the incarnation narrative are the trailblazers for this unquestioning obedience to the dictates of the Word and the Spirit.

- *"Where is the one..."* (Mt. 2:2) they unashamedly inquired about Jesus, determined to find out the truth about him for themselves. This is Wisdom.
- *"The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was... they were overjoyed."* (2:9) they pursued undeterred till they found him. This is Wisdom.
- *"They entered the house..."* (2:11) They took the necessary steps to come into the geography of God's kingdom, to come into the gravitational pull of Christ, on bended knee. The search was ended by their submission. This is Wisdom.
- *"They opened their treasures and presented him with gifts...they worshiped him..."* (2:11) The revelation of Christ sprung the latch of their hearts and they opened up their treasures, yes, but themselves to Jesus. This is Wisdom.
- *"They returned by another route..."* (2:12) Having found Christ it was impossible to leave the same way they had come. It was the beginning of a new journey, a new route. This is Wisdom.

The root of the wise men's joy was their obedience to follow where God would lead them and thus they were arguably the representative forerunners of the wise men that Jesus spoke about in his parable. And hopefully our forerunners as we come celebrating this birth, though regarded by a watching world as fools, but by Jesus as the truly wise. Wise, not because we are wise in our own eyes, but because we have at last discovered that indeed in Christ himself, are the treasures of wisdom.

This is a long preface to a poem I wrote some years ago that captures something of this. The idea is that the wise men represent Everyman, and Everyman is the sum of the journey from Eden to the present. It is called: The journey of a wise (every) man.

### **The journey of a wise (every) man**

I fell for fork-tongued hissing wiles,  
Believing that the tree would make me wise.  
I sold my soul for what beguiles,  
That damned me darkly deep to folly's guise.

Thus east of Eden, banished, I  
Would scan for pin-prick light the pit-bull black,  
And curse the eyeless, deaf, mute sky  
That mocked remorseful heart-pleas to go back.

Until that "just another" night,  
When not just any natal star white-burned  
And bade me follow its pure light.  
To westward, homeward my steps turned.

I knew where this star-path would wend.  
Was that not the Euphrates that we crossed?  
Where could this mystery journey end,  
But in the glades of paradise once lost?

But where it halted, where it stayed,  
I tell you that no seer or sage could know.  
A child within a manger laid?  
Is this where wisdom would have bid me go?

In Bethlehem, not Eden's joy,  
But heaven's pristine glory come to earth;  
The second Adam as a boy,  
My paradise regained by this new birth.

They called me wise who saw me come,  
But I was altogether foolish, dim.  
Before I worshiped, I was dumb,  
I had no wisdom when I first found him.

I wide-eyed waited through the years.  
I followed his signs now, and not a star.  
Until the day when I once more wept tears,  
And watched a Roman gibbet from afar.

My mind raced back through centuries,  
To Eden's shame and Satan's lies.  
I fell again upon my knees.  
At last there was a tree to make me wise.

*Stuart McAlpine*  
*Christmas 1999*

Pastorally yours,  
Stuart

<http://www.christourshpherd.org/pastilet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)