

## 01 03 2021: Sermon “All are Drawn to the Light”

Epiphany also called “The Feast of the Epiphany” occurs on January 06 which is the 12th night of Christmas. In our western culture it is the celebration of the three Magi as they come to find the infant Jesus. Considering the birth of Jesus it is very intriguing to think about the different people that were, for different reasons, drawn to see Jesus upon his birth and also how we approach our perspective of Jesus’ birth. Many were and all are drawn to this “Light of the World”, to Jesus. We see this in the story of Joseph, Mary, of the shepherds as they were tending their flocks and the wise men, the Magi, from the east. They were all drawn and connected to Jesus in some similar and some different manners. We also see in our reading this morning that others were, mainly King Herod, drawn to the “Light of the World” for very dark and selfish reasons. The season of Epiphany is partly about the revelation that all are drawn to the “Light” and experience Jesus through customs and traditions that have been practiced for thousands of years. We are included in the numbers of those who came to Jesus, later of course but yet we all are drawn to the “Light of the World” that is Jesus.

The Gospel of Matthew informs us of those that came to see Jesus upon hearing of his birth. Of course there was Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and eventually the Magi appeared. Also let us remember that

Herod was drawn to the “Light”, to Jesus, just not for the same reasons as these others.

The shepherds came after being visited by angels announcing the birth of Christ. Why the shepherds? Because their presence proved to be beneficial to the cause of verifying that the Messiah had come. Luke tells us that they found the baby Jesus in a manger aside Mary and Joseph and afterwards the shepherds returned glorifying God relaying all they had experienced proclaiming to all that they encountered along the way all the wondrous things they had seen and all that heard their words were amazed. They were drawn for themselves and for the benefit of the God’s mission.

We also hear of the Wise Men from the East or the Magi. We don’t know much about them and while disputed it is surmised that they were probably from Persia (Iran). This means they traveled over 800 miles to reach Jesus. It is believed that the Magi would have known of the writings in Daniel and Numbers that speak to the timeline of the birth of Jesus and the mention of a star coming out of Jacob. (Num 24:17) They were drawn to Jerusalem and asked about the birth of Jesus and after a meeting with Herod they traveled the six miles to Bethlehem. Jesus is probably two to three years old at this point and we read that they were overwhelmed with joy when they saw that the star had stopped above the location of Jesus. On their arrival they found Jesus and presented the

three expensive gifts to Jesus and his parents. Afterwards in a dream God warned the wise men to flee and not to return to Herod, so they returned home. So these Magi were men that: read Gods word, sought Jesus, and recognized the worth of Jesus and then humbled themselves and worshiped Jesus choosing to obey God rather than Herod. They were drawn to Jesus for themselves and to be used for God's mission.

Let's not forget to talk about King Herod. Given the title by the powers that be in Rome, Herod had been called the "King of the Jews" for 40 years. However, he was never was titled as "The Messiah". Herod received word that the Magi had arrived and he knew these men were looking for no ordinary successor for him but the true and only Messiah. We know that Herod understood the scriptures could give pertinent details to the proclamation of the Messiah's birth. Matthew tells us Herod and all Jerusalem were in a troubled state. So rumors were probably spreading that the Messiah was to be or had already been born. Matthew also tells us that Herod inquires of the Scribes and chief priest as to where the Messiah would be born. Herod was drawn to the "Light of the World" by his selfish greed and arrogant desire to protect what he thought was his reign over the Jews. However, even in his inability to know this, Herod plays an important role in this story. You see, the "Light" only shines to illumine the darkness. Jesus as the "Light of the Word" came to show the world the difference between darkness and

light. Be it selfish greed or not, Heron was drawn to the “Light” for himself and his role in God’s mission.

So we see that they were all drawn to the “Light of the World”, to the reality of Jesus’s birth in different ways and for different purposes. The shepherds came and after seeing Jesus they proclaimed the wondrous news, celebrating and witnessing as they traveled home. The Magi came looking for Jesus as they followed the star. The shepherds were drawn as Angels told them to go and the Magi were drawn as they were told by God’s word and of the signs that were foretold, the star. King Herod was drawn to the “Light” in selfish fear of Jesus' birth. King Herod saw himself as the king of the Jews and was so scared that he must have believed the Scribes and Chief Priests readings of the scriptures foretelling of the Messiah’s birth enough to plot the murder of Jesus. They all were drawn to the light, they all came to Jesus. They all came, they all experienced, and they all left!

There are some truths or realities that the Gospel of Matthew wants to portray to us in these 12 verses.

- 1) That without doubt Jesus is the true Messiah , The true “King of the Jews”
- 2) That all persons should worship Jesus, all nations not just the Jews.
- 3) That God did and will move the stars and anything necessary to bring Jesus to us.

- 4) That the story of Jesus disturbs people that don't want to believe in him, that don't want to worship him.
- 5) That we need to come to worship him! Bringing what we have, just as the Magi brought gifts and the shepherds brought a spirit of worship, and Mary and Joseph gave their lives to serve God.

As I mentioned before, we are also drawn and so are the lost and battered souls of this world. We are drawn to the “Light of the World” in the story of Jesus’s birth. Because Jesus was born, the world has a chance to be drawn to him. Jesus provided a way for all those seeking God to find him. All the people mentioned today were searching for Jesus for themselves but were also participants in God’s mission for the world. No matter their vocation (the shepherds) or education level (the Magi) or even those people with misplaced experiences like Herod’s. In this story we see God’s beautiful way of layering his word so that it supports itself. The shepherds came and proclaimed his birth to all that would listen. So at the exact time of his birth Christ was being heralded as the Messiah. When Jesus enters the temple 40 days after his birth Simeon and Ann announce him as the Messiah! When the wise men came a year or so after the shepherds they proclaimed him Messiah yet again. So, all people from every realm of social and economic levels at that time having been drawn to the “Light” delivered credible witness to his birth, a birth also proved by the scripture themselves.

We all come to the story of Jesus' birth; we all are drawn to the "Light of the World." The question is how do we chose to let that experience affect us. We are drawn to the "Light" to live a life of devotion and service like Joseph and Mary. Like the Shepherd's, we are to go and proclaim to all that will listen the "Good News" of Jesus. Like the Magi we are to follow God's desire and instructions no matter the resistance the world and its people press upon us. We all are invited to come to Jesus, we all are welcome to experience relationship with God, and we all are charge with the great commission, to make disciples for Christ so this world may know his love.

So we can remember a day Like Epiphany because we see that all are drawn to the "Light of the World", to Jesus. Knowing that even as it is through Jesus, not everyone comes takes the same path to God. The beauty of the season of Epiphany is that God choose to hide himself in the helpless confines of an infant's body so that everyone could know they are welcome to be part of God's family, his Church. God is calling, drawing you into relationship with him. You are welcome here; this is your home, with the Christ-child! Come receive His gifts with the saints and angels and Magi and shepherds, with the church of all time and all places. Draw near to God as he draws near to you.

Amen