

Fall Down And Worship Him

Matthew 2:1-12

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever had an epiphany? An “aha” moment? A point in time when all of a sudden *IT* (whatever it may be) makes sense? A moment when the lights go on. In our Gospel lesson, we literally have a light going on, the star that appears and leads wise men from the east to Jesus.

Epiphany is actually January 6, it is the first day after the 12th day of Christmas. We should have had a special service yesterday, but not many would have attended. So, we transferred this special celebration to today.

Let us begin by addressing the question of why did the wise men go to see the birth of Jesus? Well, they had an epiphany! Literally, a light appeared, a star appeared. No, this is not astrology! Maybe they dabbled in astronomy, looking at the stars and studying them and their movements. But what was it about this particular star that set them searching for "He who is born king of the Jews? Was it something that happened in one of the constellations? Was this some aligning of the stars and planets in some specific pattern that was new and unusual?

Dear friends, this was something different. This was a one-time event. We are not exactly sure, because we were not there. We do know that the star rose, and signaled something significant. We also know that it appeared and then it “went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.” What exactly that means we are not 100% sure, but most people *do not want to speculate* that this star came up and hung low in the sky, that it moved across the sky, and actually led them. Why not? Because to our human reason it does not make sense, stars do not move that way.

That is absolutely correct, they do not move that way. But this was something different. I tend to believe that this star was highly unusual. It was a sign from God, and the only way I think it could lead was if it was low in the sky and led them.

How did they know about what it meant when this star appeared? Well, it is probable that these men knew the Hebrew Scriptures, that they were familiar with the prophecy in Numbers 24 which mentions a star rising, one who will rule and crush the enemies – a prophecy of God’s Christ.

Was there something more than this prophecy in Numbers that led them to notice this unusual star? Daniel’s writings might also have been helpful to them. Daniel lived in captivity in the east, and he may have written other things which are now lost, but were available in that eastern area where he had been a captive. Or, it may be that God gave them a special revelation, and warned them in a special dream to follow that specific star. He did warn them in a dream to return home and not go to Herod. Suffice it to say, we do not have all the answers, we are not certain. It has not been fully revealed to us. Nor should we speculate.

What is most important to us today is that these men were not Jews. There was a certain attitude amongst the Jews that since they were God’s chosen people, everybody else they called Gentiles, the unclean. Even converts to Judaism were second class Jews. Jews thought that the Christ was for them.

Dear friends, consider this. Who were the first ones to know who Jesus was, and to worship Him? Angels informed some shepherds about their salvation. There was a man who was told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen his salvation, an old lady who was also in the temple worshiped Him, and these eastern wise men.

When God took on human flesh and entered the world, He did not do it in any conventional way. His birth was not announced to the great kings. Nor was God’s presence made known to the church leadership of that day as one might expect when God visits His people.

God placed Himself in the womb of a humble virgin, taking on human flesh. His birth announcement was made by an angel to simple shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night – those where the only Jews told about it. And God sent a special star to appear to wise men in the east – God informed these Gentiles that God's salvation was also for them.

Notice that when they came without following the star, by use of their reason, they went to Jerusalem. It was the logical place to find the One born king of the Jews, Jerusalem being the capital of Israel, where the temple was, the center of Jewish worship.

But Jesus was not there. In fact, it was the wise men who clued the church leadership in on the fact that something special was happening. The chief priests and the scribes did not get it. Even when they went back to the Scriptures to find some sort of answer, they still did not understand.

Since these church leaders did not know what was going on, they were a bit skeptical, they were unbelieving. Human reason got in the way. And then Herod reasoned things out on his own, and in so doing, came up with the wrong conclusion too.

Human reason leads people to seek God in all kinds of things, and indeed, they may believe they are seeking Christ. They may also think that they have found Him where they were seeking Him, but they have not. Many seek him in their emotions, in a sentimental song, in the friendliness of certain people, in their emotions, in their own hearts, or even in some sort of high they might feel in worship. And if those things do not happen, then they believe they have not found Him.

These things are not Christ, but they may seem to be so in our hearts and minds, according to our own reason. But too often, our reason gets in the way of God's revelation to us.

Dear friends, God leads us in humble ways. When the wise men went out from the king, when they abandoned their reason, the star came to lead them. God used the star to lead them to a humble village, to a little child, in a lowly setting. God led them to His salvation when they gave up following their reason.

It was to sinners that Christ came, those who acknowledge their place before God, humble themselves, fall down, and worship Him. Shepherds and wise men were led by God to see their Savior, and seeing Him, fell down and worshiped Him.

Today we celebrate that God draws us to Him, just as God drew these men to Him. God led these men to Him, and coming to Jesus, they fell down and worshiped him.

It is God who has led us here today. It may not have been some special star, but God led us here. He brought us here that we might find Him. And what we find is not spectacular, but it is where God has led us to. Here we find Him, just as did shepherds and wise men, hidden in humble means.

They found God's salvation, God Himself, hidden in a human child, fell down and worshiped Him. We also find Him hidden in humble means. A little bit of water. Words spoken by a man. A small wafer. A sip of wine. It is in these simple things that God leads us to Christ, when we give up our reason.

We also fall down and worship Him, we come before Him bowed down in repentance. We are blessed by God in so doing. For in so doing, we find here forgiveness and life.

Yes, let us fall down and worship. Let us offer Him our humble gifts: our thanks and praise in worship; our lives in service to Him, by serving our neighbor; and even the offerings we place in the plate. Yes, let us fall down and worship Him. Amen.