

The Epiphany
St. Matthew 2:1-12
January 8th, 2017
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

The Star

"...Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'"

Who looks up into the sky anymore, unless you live out in the country? And who looks up in the sky to find changes in the movements of the stars, to find a new star they haven't seen before?

Three *wise* men did. They were searching, looking for something special. They had seen a star, and in their wisdom, seeing it rise in the sky over the area of Jerusalem and Judea, they thought it meant there was a new king in the land.

Stars do not show themselves every time a political figure or a royal child is born. There may be increased light over night in a royal city while celebrating such a new birth, but who had seen such a star. The star meant something big was happening.

There has not been such a star since that momentous birth 2,000 years ago. Yes, there have been astrological events, but this one has not been repeated, nor has it been explained. It happened. They came. More important, *God came* into the world, and a shining star above Bethlehem marked the occasion.

The three wise men, the Three Kings of the Orient, coming from lands East of Israel, were searching. They had their eyes wide open in life. They were wise to look for more, and were given the privilege to find it. They were not consumed by their own problems back home. They were not so busy with their own lives that they didn't have time to notice the world out there all around them. And they were not party animals, revelers, merely looking for a good time or some free food and libations. They were earnestly seeking what they had observed in the night sky. This was big.

Should we be surprised by such a story? Is it far fetched? No. God was coming into the world. Why wouldn't there be a little natural fan fare to accompany God's human birth? Why wouldn't the best and brightest men of the day be intrigued by what they saw in the sky? Why wouldn't they seek out an answer as to what this was all about? They read the sign in the sky, and much more than noticing it, we know they knew what it portended, because they sought answers in Jerusalem as to when and where the child born "King of the Jews" as born.

There are various things you can place atop your Christmass tree. Many people put a lovely angel on top, representing the angels that appeared to the shepherds who were tending their flocks. Me, I have a shiny silver star atop my tree, reminding me of stars I have seen in movies about the birth of Jesus. Under my tree I have placed my crèche scene, and above it on the tree are several angels watching over the holy birth. But it is the star atop my tree that draws in your eye when you first see it, and which leads you to come over and inspect things more closely, not unlike the weary travelers from the East so long ago.

I searched for years for that star for the top of my tree. I saw various examples, but they were not the star which I had in mind. Finally, several years ago, with the help of the Internet, I located one. We search until we find what we are looking for. Do not settle for something less, as the world would tempt you to do. Look for what is the authentic goal of your journey, and along the way, remember the journey there is mostly what the search is about. The road you take matters, as the poem by Robert Frost said not so long ago.

I am reminded of the passage here from the same Gospel of Matthew which we read the story of the Wise Men this morning:

[It is from Chapter 7, [Matthew 7:7] *"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.* The words, seek and you will find stick in my mind.

Seek. Seek God each day and you will discover how close at hand God is. Seek and you will find what you are looking for. Focus, quiet the whirl around you, sit, be still. For God alone my soul in silence and stillness waits, as the Psalm says. Pray and ask for God's help as you seek God in your life, and your prayer will be answered abundantly. Knock, and the gates holding you back will open. Knock, and the door to a whole new life will open in front of you. Enter, as the homeowner beckons you to cross the threshold, and you will find the destination of your journey.

Seek, as the three wise men did so long ago. As you walk through these glass doors this morning, you have entered God's house. The Wise Men entered the house where the Holy Family was staying, and opened their treasure chests and gave gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the holy child. Today, as you enter God's house, the reverse happens, for God opens

the treasure chest which is in you, and God reveals to you the gifts God has so generously given to you. Gifts which maybe you had forgotten, or did not realize you have.

Seeking God out, we walk through the doors of St. George's. The way is transparent like the doors. The barriers are few. And light leads the way in the darkness to the well where we drink deeply and find refreshment. AMEN