

Follow Yonder Star

Matthew 2: 1-12

For weeks, we have been waiting. For weeks, we read about the promises of the Messiah who would come and change the world. Amazingly enough, it was just a few weeks ago, we celebrated the Messiah's birth. Our longing for the Messiah to come and be among the people of God once more has ended because now, now we know God is with us forevermore. To celebrate this life changing miracle, we lifted up our voices in song, singing along with the angels as they brought tidings of good news. Amazingly enough, just a few weeks ago, here in this very spot, we exclaimed joyously that Jesus Christ is born!

And now, we are ready for things to go back to normal. In fact, I think I even said to someone this past week how I was looking forward to getting back to our normal routine as a family, getting back to our normal routine as a community of faith. I shared with this person how much I was craving a sense of normalcy after so many weeks of unending chaos, otherwise described so lovingly by my brother in law as Christmas in a blender.

Sure, I'll admit I find myself feeling guilty for wanting to put baby Jesus back in the box so quickly, to put him away in storage again so soon after praying for him to come. I'll admit that I do feel some guilt for wanting, no needing my

life to get back to some sort of normalcy, especially after waiting for some many weeks for the Messiah's arrival. I feel guilty for saying all this, because it seems like, by admitting this need, I am saying that my life is not normal as long as there are visible reminders which display this life changing, life giving miracle of the Christ's birth. Sort of ironic in my profession, isn't it?

But I know I am not alone in this way of thinking. Many of you have expressed the same need for normalcy in your lives as well, so much so that I found myself wondering if the magi felt the same way after their experience of meeting the Christ child. Did they feel that it was time to move on, to get things back to normal, now that they had seen the Christ child?

After all, they had traveled far away from home, not knowing exactly what would await them when they got to their destination. All they had to go on was the star which they had seen at its rising. They arrived at Jerusalem, thinking here it is, the end of their journey, only to learn that they still had to go a little bit further down the road.

9 more miles to be exact, 9 more miles down a treacherous road, down a road that had not been maintain by Jerusalem's transportation department. There would have been potholes. There would have been bumps. There certainly would

have been pitfalls. But they decided that the King whom they were seeking was worth the journey, so off they go.

Finally they arrived in Bethlehem. They offered the Christ child gifts fit for a king. They worshipped him and paid him homage. By following yonder star, their lives were touched by God's grace. Amazingly enough, by making the journey, they experienced the opportunity to worship the promised Messiah. And now...now it was time to move on, to go back to their normal routines.

Or at least that's what we want to presume. Except that the author of Matthew tells us that the magi went home another way." With this simple phrase, Matthew is letting us know that the magi's lives were changed forever by their encounter with the Christ child. And nothing for them would ever be the same again.

Here's why I say this: Even though, it was time for the wise men to return home, they were going home with some noticeable differences. They had been transformed by this life giving miracle. After worshipping, after meeting, after encountering the newborn King, they were now open to the possibilities of God in their lives, all because they made the journey. They took the risk and followed the star.

Now their lives would be different. Now they were different. They had worshipped the new born King who had come for all people, who had come to show God's people how to live in true relationship with one another and with God. They had just encountered the Messiah who had come to bring grace to all of God's people.

By following the star, the magi experienced firsthand just how God was and is at work in this world. They had started the unknown journey with only the star to guide them and now, after following yonder star, they were changed forever.

You see, the magi remind us that our encounter with the Christ child does not end simply because we do not see him with our eyes every day. As people of faith, we hold onto the promises. We keep hope burning bright in our hearts. As people of faith, although we may not keep our manger scenes up all year to remind us of this life changing miracle, we continue to seek Jesus in our lives. We do this because we know our encounter with Christ has changed us, has transformed us, has opened us up to the possibilities of God's Kingdom in our midst.

Our life giving encounter with Christ calls us to reorient our lives, now as changed people of faith. And yes, it may not be an easy task. Our journeys of transformation will be filled with many unexpected things. There will be times

when we think that we have arrived at our destination, only to find out that there are more miles to go.

On our journeys of transformation, there will be pitfalls and potholes. There will be moments when we will want to turn around and go back to our comfort zones. And yet, on this day and all days, we remember the magi. We remember they went home a different way. We remember that their lives could not go back to normal...all because they had been touched by the love and hope of God. They had been changed by the fulfilled promises of peace. The wise men had been transformed by simply following yonder star, now open to the possibilities of God's grace at work in their lives and in our world.

And the same is offered to us again today. As we lift up the magi's journey to Bethlehem, we again celebrate our journeys of faith, journeys which we began a long time ago or maybe we are just beginning the journey. It doesn't matter. Today we celebrate all our journeys to becoming the people God created us to be by responding to the gift first given to us...the gift of love and faith in the form of a star.

So, on this Epiphany Sunday, to commemorate our journeys of faith, everyone will receive a star word. We are asking everyone to reflect on that word for the coming year. Ponder what significance this word might have in their lives,

and how God might be speaking to them through that simple message. Everyone who receives a star word is encouraged to take it home and hang it up where they are sure to see it every day.

Our Epiphany Sunday celebration represents a change in our routine; an opportunity to “be still” in the presence of God and to receive God’s gifts. It is the celebration of God’s presence breaking through to shine as a light in the darkness. So this year, and all years, let us rejoice in the constant daily reminders of how our God is at work in this world, bringing healing and wholeness for all of God’s people by following our star. Amen.