



January 3, 2021

Following the star...

The Gospel for the day of Epiphany begins with some wise men, or astrologers, following a star for thousands of miles to find the newborn king of the Jews, and finishes with them going home by another way... the tyrant Herod was just too dangerous.

There are indeed tyrants in our world who cause people to fear. Herod was brutal certainly, but in a way, we all know something about tyrants. We know them in our own world's political arenas, but they come in all sorts of shapes. Sometimes they are parents, sometimes they are teachers, or schoolyard bullies... sometimes they are bosses... or ministers even. They are anyone who disregards what matters to us.

Each of us likely have had times when we were ourselves tyrants; we might have known it at the time or maybe not; either way it is something to repent of and put behind us. Each of us also likely have tyrants in our heads, telling us terrible things about ourselves, making us feel things and live ways that God didn't intend, I don't think.

That is why the season of Epiphany is a gift. A day we remember a star leading people out of what is ordinary for them, scary even, to somewhere new. The story of the star even disarms the tyrants in a way... it points to a different reality. Just think about it... the wise people from a far country walk right past the king-tyrant, looking for a child who promises a different way!

Beautifully dressed strangers, coming not to flaunt their power, like Herod, but rather to kneel in gentleness before this child...

People coming from far away, from a different belief system: God's people coming together to understand who God is, and so who they are called to be...

This day and this star, lift our eyes from the failings of the earth which we know so well, to the sky which can teach us something new...

This star that seeks to teach us something new is good news, this year especially, when it almost seems like life itself is our tyrant, keeping us trapped in ways we don't want...

Lots of us would like our eyes to be lifted from the ordinariness of our living rooms, the reality of living with ourselves alone, or the same person or people day after day... We all want health and goodness for ourselves and our world.

This year, we can all benefit from a star that takes us somewhere, and a vision of light... And Epiphany is that... This season of Epiphany God seeks to transport us to a different realm, where there are new insights, new hopes not just for us but for everyone.

God wants us to look up and see a star, and know that something different is possible, in our lives, in our world. It is what God wants! We can look at this time of pandemic as a retreat, a time of learning... and in our hearts and spirits we can follow to a new place, a new thought, a new hope.

Somebody said to me the other day, these months have been depressing! We all know that feeling, but maybe these days can instead lead to something new! We can learn to breathe and pray and set our

worry about things aside. We can maybe try to set aside our annoyance with people we don't like, including ourselves. We can decide that rather than nurture our grudges, we will lose them this very night... We can decide that we will work on making this a better world... Maybe we can even make a point of looking for joy, blessings, laughter, like we haven't done for a long time!!

In short, we can leave the ways that we have gone that don't serve us or our neighbours well. We might need stars to do it, and so if you want, I suggest that you find a piece of paper, draw a star, and make it as fancy as you want, and then put it up somewhere to remind yourself that God is calling us to a new country.

The star is important, because it guides us, but its point is that it reminds us of something new:

God's light that leads us to the cradle of Christ, born to give us new life!

Jesus, in whom we meet God, who left glory behind, to live with all who struggle...

Jesus who laughed with his disciples, and taught them a new way...

Jesus who cared for the ones in need.

Jesus who ate and drank and fed thousands...

Jesus who came to give us abundant life...



Happy Epiphany, Happy New Year, this 2021! This year, lift your eyes, follow the star, and know that Jesus was born to love you... and love all of us into something new!

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