

January 7, 2018

The Epiphany of the Lord
Matthew 2:1-12

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When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage."

After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Background:

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The Magi and Herod represent two very different responses to the presence of Jesus. Those who have the advantage of being familiar with the religious traditions (that should help them recognize the significance of the events unfolding before them) are unable to identify who Jesus is. They respond with fear, and, as we know the story, even murder of the innocent. Those without the benefit of being familiar with the religious tradition are willing take on personal risk. They recognize the significance of this infant's birth: God's love is powerful and pervasive--it will not be thwarted. They offer the gifts that they have, bow reverently, and take their leave.

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2. Where do you find the signs of God's presence in creation, in human history, and in your own history?
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4. The Magi were men who were comfortable enough with the darkness to study changes in the night sky. What are the areas of darkness in your own life today? Are you more apt to avoid reflection on your own darkness, or to look for signs of God's presence in the darkness?
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7. Where might God be trying to break in and be present anew in your world?

8. What stands out for you in Matthew's description of the birth of Jesus? What might this be showing you about how God is present in the events of your life?
9. Can you take some time to talk to God about how you see God revealing God's plan in your own life and how you are responding, or about some other thought or feeling that this gospel makes present to you?

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