

“Like a Wise Man!”

- Today we celebrate Epiphany!
 - + We celebrate the ancient promises of God that have prepared and nurtured the hopes and faith of God's people.
- So why the story of the Wise Men?
Why are they the headliners of Epiphany Sunday?
 - + The early Christian church saw the visit of the Magi and the descending dove of Christ's baptism as “Epiphanies” – when the presence of God in Christ was visible and obvious!
 - + The arrival of the Wise Men opens our eyes to the true Lordship of Jesus Christ!
- But why do you suppose the Magi thought it was a good idea to travel a treacherous expanse laden with precious gifts, just to bow in front of a foreign child?
 - + Time-consuming! Expensive! Dangerous!
 - + Most would consider it foolhardy!
- You see, the Magi had everything the world promises will bring us happiness and fulfillment!
 - + The same empty, superficial answers that so many fall for today!
 - + They had wealth, power, influence, social standing...but it wasn't enough!
- Just as we do today, they longed to know that their lives had meaning and purpose! ...that there was a God that loved and saved his children!
 - + So they searched the stars!
 - + ...and they studied Scripture!
- They studied the scriptures of many cultures, but Jewish scripture was held in the highest regard as being ancient and authentic.
- Let me pause here. Many today denigrate scripture and scoff at Bible stories. The story of the Wise Men is mocked by skeptics as being a fanciful tale designed to inflate Gospel claims.
- But Magi actually existed.
 - + They knew of Elijah and fire on the mountain.
 - + They knew of Moses and the flight from Egypt.
 - + They knew of Isaiah and the promise of God come down to earth as Messiah, servant, savior, king.
 - + And, oh how they longed for those promises to be true!
- Do you ever get chill bumps?
You're going to get them now!
 - + In 2010, a 3,000 year old inscription was found in a Zoroastrian temple.
 - + It was a tribute to the Jewish prophet Balaam.
 - + Yes, that Balaam. A prophet we rarely lift up.
 - + But now here come the chills!
- What is Balaam's most well-known prophecy?
 - + “There shall come forth a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel!” ~Numbers 24:17
- Oh, yes, they saw the star! They were expecting the star, watching for the star, and yearning for the star! So they came to bow before the king!
- A star is rising over Lafayette Presbyterian Church.. Perhaps many will miss it.
 - But some will see the star! Just as did the Magi, the Wise Men!
 - + Those that anticipate the star!
 - + Those who watch for the star!
 - + Those who yearn for the birth of the king!
- Watch for the star, for the wise still seek him!
The star of prophecy! The star of hope!
 - + Your life matters to the God of all creation!
 - + You are so important to God that God will humble himself to lift you up!
 - + God wants to commune with you today, confirming the eternal covenant by the body and blood of Christ!
- The star of prophecy promises us that, in Christ, we will prevail.
- The birth of Christ invites you to be born again through faith and trust!
- The light of Christ overcomes the shadows in our lives!
- The love of Christ promises to wipe away sin and transgression.
- Doesn't it move you deeply to picture the Magi in Bethlehem, bowing joyously before the child who confirmed and affirmed their every yearning?!
- Well, today is ALSO a good day to bow in the house of the Lord. I invite you to bow with me now— Not out of habit or deference...I'm asking you to bow like a Wise Man,
 - + Tearfully! + Reverently! + Joyfully!

• **Let us pray:** Lord God, open our hearts to the power and the promise of prophecy! May we embrace anew the scriptures of old, and may our eyes be opened to behold the star of light, the star of love, the star of hope. Lead us as you did the Magi to the humble manger, that each day may be a good day to bow in the house of the Lord! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Matthew 2:1-12

- 1** In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,
- 2** 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.”
- 3** When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;
- 4** and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
- 5** They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:
- 6** ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”
- 7** Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.
- 8** Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”
- 9** When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.
- 10** When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.
- 11** On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- 12** And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.