

## **Sermon for Epiphany 2018**

I wonder what the wise men saw in the sky that first night. What was it that got them thinking? What was it that motivated them to pack up all their belongings and begin a journey to hundreds, maybe thousands, of miles away? What had been revealed to them? Was it in the sky, in their mind, in their heart? Or was it all three?

We don't have much historical information about these wise men nor their journey. St. Matthew says they came from the East. Some have speculated they were from Persia. We like to think that there were three of them but St. Matthew doesn't state how many and the tradition of the church has varied the number in different times and cultures; 2, 3, 4, 8, even 12. We call them Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar but those names seem to originate from a seventh century tradition. And what about "the star?" Some commentators have viewed this as a supernatural phenomenon, some just a regular star, some a comet, and others as a conjunction or grouping of planets.

But this lack of historical information, far from being a problem to us, is as important as the story itself. It serves as a reminder that this story, this Epiphany journey, is not just the wise men's journey; it is everyone's journey. The truth of sacred scripture is never limited to nor contained only in the past. Every passage, every word, lives in us and our private thoughts and reflections on the bible takes us journeying to places where only God can accompany us.

I don't know what was in the sky, what the wise men saw, nor what convinced them to set out on such a risky venture. I don't know what was in their minds; what they thought, asked, or talked about. I don't know what was in their hearts; what they felt, dreamed, or longed for. But I know that there have been times when each of us have experienced Epiphany;

times when our night sky has been brightly lit, times when our minds have been illumined, times when our hearts have been enlightened. Those times have revealed to us a life and world larger than before. There have been moments that gave us the courage to travel beyond the borders and boundaries that usually define our lives. Epiphanies are those times when something calls us or moves us, and we suddenly find ourselves in a new place where we see the face of God in a new way; we suddenly see God so human, so real, so relevant that he almost seems ordinary, maybe too ordinary to believe.

That's what happened to the wise men. Something stirred within them and they began to wonder, to wander, to imagine, that their lives were part of a much larger story. Could it be that the one who created life, who lovingly placed the stars in the sky, noticed them, knew them, lived within them, and was calling them? Could it be that the light they saw in the sky was a reflection of the divine light that burned throughout the universe, but which also burned within each of them? The divine light that burns within each one of us too?

To seriously consider these questions is to begin the journey. That journey took the wise men to the house where they found the answer to their questions; a babe in the arms of his mother, Mary. We may travel a different route than the wise men did, but we end up in the same place.

Amen.