

2nd Sunday after Christmas

January 3, 2021

Collect: O GOD, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Lessons: Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalm 84:1-8

Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23 or Luke 2:41-52 or Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon: We have moved past the church season of Advent. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior has come. He is God's gift to mankind and a reminder that God continues to love man.

We are now in the Church season of Epiphany where Jesus becomes known to the world. He is not the warrior king that some expected nor will he force the Roman captors out of Israel and put the government into their hands.

Instead, he will bring about a new understanding of and a new relationship with God. He will teach that God doesn't want sacrifices, but wants man to live a life that is based on love for God and love for his fellowman.

Our Gospel lessons today tells the story of wisemen coming from the east to Palestine to find the newborn king. They were probably astrologers or priests who interpreted dreams.

As individuals they had read the stars and the writings of the prophets. They each had seen a brilliant star in the sky and believed that this star heralded the birth of a newborn who would be king of the Jews. It is theorized that although they were traveling as individuals, they met and decided to journey together.

The star led them to Judea and they went about asking in Jerusalem, “Where is this child that is born king of the Jews?” They said they had studied the stars and it was revealed that it was time for the child to be born. They had come to Judea because the prophets had written he would be born in Bethlehem. And they wanted to pay homage to him.

As they were moving about and asking of the child’s birth, this must have created some anticipation and generated a lot of talk among the Jewish people and their religious leaders. They may have had an expectancy that good things were about to happen. A prophesy was about to be fulfilled.

King Herod, the Roman who was king and governor of that area was frightened. He saw this Jewish king as competition and wanted to get rid of him as quick as possible. He did not want him to grow and develop followers. Why? There might be riots and the people would try to overthrow him and banish him from their land.

So, secretly he called the Wisemen to his palace and asked them to inform him when they had found the child, He told them that he too wanted to pay homage.

The star led the Wisemen to the town of Bethlehem and the stable Jesus was born in. They paid homage to him giving him expensive gifts of myrrh, frankincense and gold. This they thought was the greatest treasure they could offer a king.

God had warned them in a dream that Herod had evil plans in mind and they may have known that instead of paying homage, Herod would kill the child. So, they secretly left town by another route. And as they returned home, they told others they met along the way about the birth of Jesus.

Right now, we and the rest of the world are undergoing an epiphany of major importance. Countries are beginning to vaccinate their people with vaccines they have developed against the COVID –19 Virus. The hope is that this will stop the spread of the virus. We had been hoping for some medicine or vaccine that would be effective against the virus, and now it’s here. Amen.

Rev. Lionel Starkes

