

**TITLE:** FOLLOW THE LIGHT

**TEXT:** MATTHEW 2:1-12

**GOD'S WORD:** ISAIAH 2:5-6 & 22

## **I – EPIPHANY:**

Today is the Sunday we celebrate as Epiphany. There is all kinds of theology behind this day but we'll suffice it to say that it's the day each year we look at the story of the Magi coming to see Jesus and bringing him gifts.

We have preached this day about the gifts that were brought to the young Savior. We have preached about how these Magi weren't Jewish, but were from other belief traditions. About how they were studying ancient prophecies and that led them to be looking for the star. We have even talked in other years about the star itself.

But this year I want to look at something a little different. I want to have us concentrate on the decision the Magi made and how it continues our theme of the light.

## **II – TEXT:**

I invite you to listen again to the familiar Scripture concerning the visit of the Magi to the Christ child...

### **Matthew 2:1-12 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, <sup>2</sup>“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

<sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,  
are not least among the ruling cities of Judah,  
for a ruler will come from you  
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

<sup>9</sup> After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

So these strange looking men show up in the region one day looking a little out of place. Probably dressed in fine outfits and accompanied by camels to carry them and their gear, as well as slaves to set up their camp sites, cook their meals, and wait on them in other ways. These weren't normal people just sightseeing and looking for a Holiday Inn Express. These are learned men, men used to the fine fixings of the king's palace where they served as his advisors.

And they were on a special mission. They were looking for the Messiah. The one who's birth had been foretold by prophets and manuscripts. They knew as soon as they saw his star in the sky that the prophecies had come true. So, they FOLLOWED THE LIGHT.

They traveled towards Jesus by following the light of the star. When they were getting close they asked people if they knew where this special child had been born. This word soon got back to the king, Herod, who was always afraid that this Messiah would be born and would usurp his power and throne. So he called on his own Magi, his own advisors and asked them about the child's birth. They told him the child he was now looking for was to be born in Bethlehem. Next he called for the Magi to come and meet with him. With murderous intentions he told them that when they found the child they should come back and let him know the child's location so he could worship him too. We know from the Scripture that instead he did some calculations on the child's birth date and later send his army to murder all the children age two or less.

The Magi followed the star and found Jesus in a house with his parents and there presented him with their gifts for this newborn King. God warned them in a dream what Herod was up to so they did not go and meet with him as he had asked, but fled the region by another route.

### **III – CHOICE:**

It's in this passage that I see a choice that still speaks to us today. We have been talking all Advent about the darkness and the light. Today I want to tell you that you have to make a choice.

The Wise men came to the region because they had followed the light. They chose to do this based on how special they believed the light to be. Then they met the darkness...King Herod. He had made a choice in his

life to follow the darkness. This would result in the attempted murder of the light, and resulted in the murder of innocent children.

But then the Wise men made a very important decision. After they saw the Light, found Jesus, and gave him lavish gifts, they chose to follow the light further. They decided not to bow to the political pressures of the king. They were warned by God not to and they obeyed. **THEY FOLLOWED THE LIGHT.** They didn't allow worldly politics of the day to throw them off course. They chose to follow the light and do the will of God.

#### **IV – DARK YEARS:**

As we enter this New Year, I think we need to do so recognizing that darkness is still present in the world today! I know I'll probably hear about this but I am boldly proclaiming to you that regardless of your political affiliations, be they Republican or Democratic, there is darkness in our present day politics.

- There is darkness in our economy
- There is darkness in our job markets
- There is darkness in our food supplies
- There is darkness in all our markets
- There is darkness in our relations with other countries
- There is darkness in our religions
- There is darkness in our justice systems
- And the list could go on and on.

Let us not forget the darkness of two years dealing with a pandemic that never seems to like it will ever end. How much darkness has it ushered into our lives? Arguments over vaccines and masks, closing down schools, businesses, and churches. Over flowing hospitals, overworked health care professionals, isolation, and death.

## **V – FOLLOW THE LIGHT:**

As we venture in to this new year of 2022 we have a choice to make. Will we allow the darkness to overcome us, or will we FOLLOW THE LIGHT!

We have proclaimed to you during all of Advent that “a light shines in the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.” (John 1:5) But you have to choose to follow the light. You have to choose to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

There will always be darkness in this world until Jesus returns to make it all new again. But regardless of what’s going on with humans, with Jesus we have the Hope that everything will work out Okay – the way God wants it to.

I am challenging us to enter this New Year as the strong and formidable Church of Jesus Christ. That we would do everything in our power to live in and share the Light of the world with everyone. That we would not get bogged down by the darkness that surrounds us but instead use the light to extinguish it.

I challenge us all to live out the promise of Jesus that this is his Church and not even the gates of Hell will prevail against it...COVID WON’T, GOVERNMENT WON’T, THE ECONOMY WON’T, POLITICAL CORRECTIVENESS WON’T, and absolutely no segment of worldly darkness will have a chance against the Church of Christ on fire from the light!

As we go to communion I ask you to share with God your decision to follow Herod...or follow the Light.

AMEN

**TO COMMUNION**