

January 5, 2025

Epiphany

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Have the Kings made it to their destination?

No, I don't mean the the Magi in Matthew's gospel this morning – I mean the kings on Rt 88

I had heard about them for three years, but this was the first year I saw them and took notice of them, but to be honest I don't know where their journey ends

Where does their journey end?

This time, my question is both about the kings on Rt 88 and the Magi in Matthew's gospel

Where does their journey end?

Matthew tells us that these great wise ones – who we have started to call “Kings,” but who were likely followers of an ancient tradition called Zoroastrianism who were adept at astronomy as well as astrology — followed the guidance of a star all the way to Jerusalem

Why they stopped here is a bit unknown: was it dawn and the star was no longer in the sky so they stopped in the largest city?

All we know is that the star led them this far and then, while there, they were able to get an audience with King Herod and were able to ask him: “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.”

Not one to like anything that might challenge his power and control of the region, Herod now also became quite curious as to where this new baby king had been born

So he gathered the chief priests and scribes and asked them the same question: where?

The chief priests and scribes would have both known the answer and could point to the scriptures to help convey the message that the child has been born “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘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.’”

That latter part is a quote from the prophet Micah (5:2)

Finally the Magi, and King Herod, get an answer to their question: where?

Ah, but if we pay a bit closer attention, the answer the Magi and King Herod get contains more than just the information to the question “where?” – it also tells us “who?”

“Bethlehem...from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel”

from you shall come the one hoped for

from you shall come our true King

The Magi follow the direction they were given, and sure enough as they leave Jerusalem the star they had seen is once again in the sky and leads them all the way to where Jesus lay

The Magi find Jesus in the “where,” and they are so moved by the “who” that they find, that they offer him gifts fit for a King

This is the Epiphany which we celebrate today - the revelation of Christ

The savior of the world is revealed to them because they dared to ask "where?"

But, interestingly, the story doesn't end with the gifts – rather, we get one more tidbit about the Magi from Matthew

He tells us that they were warned in a dream of King Herod's devious plans for this newborn "King" and so as they leave to go home, they take "another road"

This time the Magi know *where* they're headed – home – but they don't really know "how?"

It makes me wonder, if their first question of "where?" turned out to reveal "who?" does "how?" also reveal "who?"

If their question "where will we find him?" ultimately revealed to them the wonderful truth of "who they found," does their question of "how will we get there?" perhaps also reveal "who accompanies us on this unknown journey?"

Jan Richardson wrote a beautiful poem that, for me, provides revelation

"Blessing of the Magi" by Jan Richardson

There is no reversing  
this road.  
The path that bore you here  
goes in one direction only,  
every step drawing you  
down a way

by which you will not  
return.

You thought arrival  
was everything,  
that your entire journey  
ended with kneeling  
in the place  
you had spent all  
to find.

When you laid down  
your gift,  
release came with such ease,  
your treasure tumbling  
from your hands  
in awe and  
benediction.

Now the knowledge  
of your leaving  
comes like a stone laid  
over your heart,  
the familiar path closed  
and not even the solace  
of a star  
to guide your way.

You will set out in fear.  
You will set out in dream.

But you will set out

by that other road  
that lies in shadow  
and in dark.

We cannot show you  
the route that will  
take you home;  
that way is yours  
and will be found  
in the walking.

But we tell you,  
you will wonder  
at how the light you thought  
you had left behind  
goes with you,  
spilling from  
your empty hands,  
shimmering beneath  
your homeward feet,  
illuminating the road  
with every step  
you take.

The “who,” once discovered, once revealed, goes with you

“where?” revealed “who?” and from that moment on, “who” accompanies  
you in the “when?” “why?” and “how?”

The Magi’s journey is in so many ways our journey

There are “stars” in our “skies” that cause us to seek – to seek truth, to  
seek meaning, to seek solace, to seek understanding, to seek wisdom, to  
seek wholeness, to seek love, to seek peace

Where will we find these things?

perhaps a wise priest or scribe – or a parent or friend or acquaintance - at some point in your life said to you “in church you will hear about God and the one he sent to show us the way”

And in your search for “where” to find these things, you will find “who” – Jesus the Christ, Jesus the teacher, Jesus the liberator, Jesus the forgiver, Jesus the lover, Jesus the peacemaker, Jesus the alternative reality made real

The revelation of the “who” is the revelation of Jesus, God with us

And in our awe and wonder at discovering the “who” we offer our gifts – our selves, our voices, our prayers, our praises, our gratitude, our hope – as the Magi offered their gifts

And, like the Magi, when we leave here – even if we’re going down a road we’ve traveled many times – we can wonder how we re-enter that world

You will set out in fear.  
You will set out in dream.

But you will set out

by that other road  
that lies in shadow  
and in dark.

We cannot show you  
the route that will  
take you home;  
that way is yours  
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But we tell you,  
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illuminating the road  
with every step  
you take.

Life – the where, the when, the why, the how – is hard

Go into the world knowing the who – Jesus, God with us – goes with you,  
spilling from your hands, shimmering beneath your feet, illuminating the  
road with every step you take.

A blessed Epiphany!

Amen.