

Matthew 2:1-12

GOOD NEWS ... there are only 355 shopping days until Next Christmas! We are actually still in Christmastide, today being the Epiphany, the 12th and last day of Christmas. Time for advance planning!

Now, while that sounds ludicrous [except to retailers who actually already working on next Christmas based on this year's performance!], think about it: **WOULDN'T IT BE WONDERFUL IF WE COULD BE FOCUSED ON THE PEACE AND JOY OF CHRISTMAS ALL YEAR LONG?** The splurge of generosity and good will and harmony that come out in this holy season now culminating extended all year ... imagine that! Whatismore, if generosity were not tangled up in gift exchange or that peace relegated to peace of mind and tranquility?

The end of the Nativity narrative comes with these wise men, Magi. What does this teach us?

1. What God did at Christmas has year-round significance and application;
2. The episode exhibits things we need to know about how God relates to us.

I. **God will disclose Himself to those who truly seek Him.** We pray that we may find, and be found **by Him**. The story relays how a rising star was seen and followed by these foreigners to locate a miracle King, of the Jews! A star would surely be visible for those who had eyes to see, who were searching for a sign of God; they were apparently on the look-out, right?

Simply, God reveals Himself to those who truly seek Him, without the screens and filters of their cultures and biases and prejudices veiling the sight. It has forever been the case that mostly those who say they are seeking God are truly seeking a God who matches their own expectations and perceived needs. Today as ever we refashion

God not by His Word, left to us for the purpose of reproof and correction, as the Bible says of itself, but after our own image, our own needs and self-justifications. How else do you come up with a God who is pleased by the destruction, rather reconstruction, of the Created order, the human being itself, and the redefining of everything according to our current cultural norms? See in the Magi how God leads open-minded foreigners to a crib housing the Savior of all mankind, as it was forecast by the prophet Jeremiah: *when you search for Me wholeheartedly, you will find Me* Jer. 29:13.

II. **God provides direction for those who listen.** *And having been warned in a dream NOT to return to (King) Herod, they went home by another way.* Whatever doubts and perplexities may have accompanied their strange journey, following a star, and being courted by a King to report to him, they took to heart the guidance given them and went home by another way.

A loving God will, just like a loving parent but ever so much more so, guidance to protect and provide for those who are listening and willing to obey. Are you availing yourself of the guidance He has afforded you? Until you do, there is really no reason to expect more. Are you steeping yourself in His Word already provided? Are you regularly, not just on the fly, praying and listening to Him? It has been the observation of saints throughout the ages that God does provide for those who accept whatsoever He provides for guidance.

III. **God leads most often step by step.** Daily bread. One step at a time – not the whole map and strategy until the End. These Magi were willing to go into the unknown one step at a time, without complete instructions. That is really a test of faith. That is how God refined His People Israel in the desert for 40 years: day by day –

not by long-range, detailed planning. Joseph, Jesus' guardian, earthly Father, similarly received directions one step at a time, finally, get up! *take the babe and his mother at once, at night and flee to Egypt.* Strange it is to follow His Ways as we do not know His fuller purposes until we need to. Don't expect you'll get more advance planning than did the Holy Family! Marvelous, mysterious, and frightening it must have been, and still be, to follow Him listening attentively day by day!

This is a powerful reminder to us in the disposition of the lives entrusted to us. We need guidance, but more than what we think we need, God....we need God any and every way He chooses to use and direct us. If that seems unexpected, that is likely in favor of its verification, because as Isaiah relays the word of the Lord, *My ways are not your ways, not your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

We all need to take to heart the lesson learned by a famously bewildered fictional man: *There is a certain providence in the fall of a sparrow,* and *are you not of more value than many sparrows?* The essential lesson is, *the readiness is all.* The readiness to

- ✘ steep oneself in God,
- ✘ in His Words,
- ✘ in prayer and supplication to Him,

so that like the shepherds and angels and the Magi, you are ready to move out when the moment arises. **If you are ready to know Him as He is, He will use you, guide you, lead you, and thereby, bless you.**

What else would you expect from a perfect Father?!