

## Matthew 2: 1-13

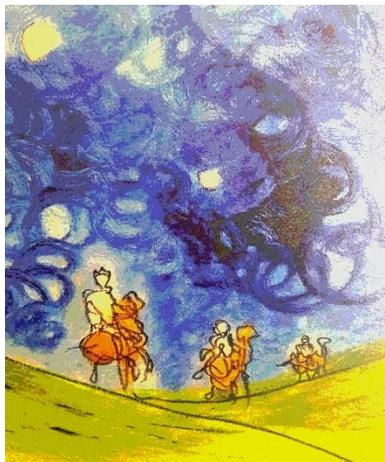
**2** In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> ‘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.’”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### Trinity Presbyterian Church January 7, 2018

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**“The Blessing of Wonder”  
(Welcoming of New Members)**

There is a picture of the wise people’s journey hanging in my office. It has always been a favorite story of mine. Even though technically the journey would’ve taken two years before the wise one’s would have arrived at the smelly manger. And even though astrologers have said that it is scientifically impossible for a new star to rise for a short time and then *poof* disappear. Even though the bible never says anything about the travelers being kings, or that there are

only three of them, or that they are even men for that matter, it is still a wonderful story. The magi pack their bags and head out on the long westward journey using nothing but the star of wonder as their guide.

When was the last time we were filled with wonder? How long since we wondered what beautiful thing God was doing? Have you ever watched a one-year old unwrap a gift? Amazing how she doesn't care about the gift at all, but prefers to play with the wrapping paper and cardboard box. And seriously, what parent can deny the wonders of bubble wrap! Or remember the days of our youth when the living room floor became a molten lava pit that we all had to avoid? The couch cushions become little safe islands laid out on the carpet that we could hop on. Or maybe we felt wonder on our wedding day when we looked at our spouse's eyes and thought to ourselves that "out of seven billion people in the world, you chose me." Maybe after fifty years of being with the same person you look at each other and wonder.

Or, if we're honest, perhaps we haven't felt a sense of awe for a while now. Life has a way of squeezing the wonder out of us, doesn't it? We crawl out of bed, guzzle down our four cups of coffee, commute to our jobs, or make a list of errands to run. And along the routine journey of the day to day, the wonderment wears off and we find ourselves asking if life has more to offer or if this is all there is. Or maybe our wonder left us after we lost something, or we lost someone, and life just hasn't been the same since. Abraham Heschel once said, "I never asked for success or wisdom...I only asked for wonder." So when was the last time we felt it? How long has it been since we have been in awe of a beautiful thing God was doing?

The star-searching magi scanned the same horizon as they had done every other night. Reading the constellations like the Evening Gazette. Except, this time they noticed new news! A supernova whose radiance was as bright as a million birthday candles. So they make an "L" shape with their hands and squint their eyes to measure its coordinates in the oblong dome. Then the celestial light begins to hum and pulse like a newborn's heartbeat—*bum bum, bum bum, bum bum*. And somehow, the magi understood the meaning behind the message: come, a new king is born. So they mounted their camels and caravanned down the long road leading to Jerusalem. They tracked the star until it finally parked over a meager stable in a rural town called Bethlehem. And when they finally meet the child whose star had summoned them, do you remember what they did? The star stops and they were, "overwhelmed with joy." So overwhelmed that it brought them to their knees in worship.

Well, it makes me wonder. I wonder if there is a star resting over Trinity. A star of welcome whose gravity is pulling others in to experience the joy and love of God here. At the new member's class, session listened to the stories of our new inquirers. We heard some speak about needing a safe place to worship after the presidential election. Some said it took a long time for them to get here after a painful church experience. Others said that Trinity was where their children felt at home. Listen beneath their words and we can hear their calling: this is where their journey has led them and maybe even where they have found Jesus' presence—in the spirit of this church. In a church where someone takes the time to remember who you are

after a few visits. Or where our tears are held with care as we recall the ache-filled stories which have shaped our lives. Or where a two-year old boy can dance in a rainbow skirt in the spotlight of a sunbeam and it is not seen as something to be squashed, but as something to be witnessed as a beautiful wonder of a child worshipping in his own way. One of our new members, after the first couple times he worshiped with us wrote me a letter. He said that if he could describe our church in one word it would be "happy." When the star finally stopped the magi were overwhelmed with joy and it brought them to their knees in worship. Wonder, if there is a star resting over us. Inviting others to experience the joy and love of God, right here.

After the wise people emptied their satchels, offering their famous gifts, they head home by another way. Perhaps it is what an experience with God does. It sends us home down a different road than when we first arrived. Maybe it opens us up, or reminds us of something we had forgotten, or challenges us to see the world in a different light.

A couple of days ago, I think I witnessed a miracle in Costco's food court. There was an older gentleman who was wearing a bright red ballcap on his head. The sentence stitched into it read, "Make America Great Again." It was lunchtime and the food court was crowded so he was looking for a place to sit. Wouldn't you know, the only spot available was at a table where an African-American family of three with a little girl sat eating their lunch. The man asked them, "Do you mind if I sit next to you?" The little girl piped up, "Sure!" The man looked at the parents. The dad just gave him a 'go ahead' nod. So the man sat down and asked the little girl her name. Then I overheard him saying he had a daughter too who was all grown up now. And then he turned to the parents, asking them their names and started a full-fledged getting-to-know-you conversation with them. I have to confess, I just about choked on my food when he got up from the table, thanked them and then told them he thought they had the most beautiful family. In the moment, I could feel something open up inside of me. Now I can't prove it, but I swear I think I saw that same star of wonder shining its light over their table. And I can't remember what it was any of us were having for lunch that day, but I do know it tasted like bread and wine.

And so, I traveled home by another way. Filled with wonder about the beautiful thing God had just done.