

Sermon for The Epiphany  
January 6, 2023  
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Trinity on the Hill Episcopal Church  
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-7,10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

Imagine what it would be like:  
Every night you climb on to your roof and you study the stars.  
This is something you have done  
since you were old enough to help your father,  
who has done the same thing  
since he was old enough to help his father.

You study the stars,  
you plot the movement of the constellations.  
You watch as stellar events unfold before your eyes,  
and you plot the significance of all of these events  
and what has happened in the world around you.

You notice that certain stars are in certain places when wars begin;  
you notice other stars are in other places when disasters occur;  
and you notice that the movement of the stars and the constellations seem to reflect  
the events you chart of life on earth.  
You note and correlate the changes and events on earth  
by following what's going on in the heavens.

And then one night you notice something new.  
There's a brightness that wasn't there the night before,  
and it remains there the next night and the night after.

You examine your charts and the logs of events  
and star movements, and are confounded.

You call in your friends  
who also watch the stars and compare notes.  
Scratching your collective heads  
you decide the heavens are telling you something.

Your wise collective travels to the capital  
to consult the archives of the great watchers from the past.

After a diligent search y

ou discover that such singular events have occurred before,  
not in this way, not quite as brightly,  
but there have been events.  
And these similarities suggest  
that someone of significance is about to be born – a king.

You and your friends decide this is an event that you must witness.  
So you pack up your bags, assemble a caravan and depart  
to follow this heavenly event to where it will lead you.

I remember our family's vacation trips.  
We all packed up ...  
actually, Mom did the packing,  
and we'd help carry the bags out to the driveway,  
and my father would load the car –  
but only after all the baggage was in the driveway.

I probably don't need to tell you what happened  
when one of us, or even my mom,  
showed up with a bag after the packing was done.

My mother had a cooler  
that rested between the front and back seats  
filled with baloney and bread and mustard  
to make sandwiches as we went along.  
And we'd play games –  
like counting the license plates from different states –  
all the way to Florida.

I remember the first time I saw the ocean.  
Nothing but blue-green for as far as I could see.  
And when the sun went down and darkness surrounded us,  
all we could see was the stars – so many stars.

It must have been like being in the desert.  
No lights but the stars for as far as the eye could see,  
just darkness and little bits of light.

I remember our first camping trip to Chaco Canyon.  
We watched the sun set, and eased into the coming night.  
Before the moon rose, it was so absolutely dark,  
I held my hand up in front of my face and I couldn't see it.  
All I could see was the stars.  
They all seemed like some giant web of light –  
Interweaving and interconnected.

I've always felt drawn to watch the stars,  
and it always seems as though

they are looking back at me as I am looking out at them.

The Magi had that sort of relationship with the stars.  
They most likely would have been Persian astrologers  
from what it now Iraq or Iran,  
the wisest of the wise, philosophers and counselors.  
And they sought what the stars had told them to look for –  
the birth of a king.

They consult the king of the region – Herod,  
and are told by Herod’s sages that any king born in Israel  
would be born in Bethlehem – the city of David.  
And so they go to find the babe and his mother and father.  
And that they do.

What they witness is what we call The Epiphany –  
the revealing of the birth of Jesus as the King of the world.  
In this baby rests the future of the world’s salvation.  
And the magi give gifts to the newborn:  
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(You know that the Scriptures don’t say  
that there were three wise men?  
That’s just extrapolated from the number of gifts.  
And you know, the three kings weren’t kings but, as I’ve said,  
probably astrologers or magi.  
And the Magi only show up in Matthew.  
Luke doesn’t have Magi; Luke has shepherds.  
And Matthew doesn’t have shepherds, only Magi.)

It’s the Epiphany – the revealing of God in human form.  
It’s THE Epiphany: The revealing of the Lord God Almighty  
born in human form, in the form of a baby.

What The Epiphany means to us is even reflected in the dictionary:

epiphany |iˈpɪfəni|

noun ( pl. **-nies**) (also **Epiphany**)

the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles  
as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12).

- the festival commemorating this on January 6.
- a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being.
- a moment of sudden revelation or insight.

The Magi manifest their gifts as they gaze into the child’s face.  
And they see the face of God looking back at them  
with unconditional love and adoration.

That's what made all those cold nights  
and sore backs worth the trip.

To see that face,  
and feel the radiance of that moment.  
To stand in the darkness of this world  
and suddenly to know that a light  
had been lit against the darkness,  
a light that could not be extinguished.

That light is what we celebrate this day.  
The light we each carry in our souls  
and reveal to the world in how we live our lives.  
This is the gift God gave us at Christmas;  
It is the gift we unwrap today in the celebration of The Epiphany  
in the promise of following the light into Epiphany.

As it says in the Collect today:  
"O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:  
Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to  
face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one  
God, now and for ever. Amen."