

The Lord's Message: Guided by the Light

Date: January 9, 2022

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Matthew 2:1-12

Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Now, you are probably thinking that Pastor Dave is stuck in the Christmas spirit. Now, I do not think that is a bad thing, do you? You have probably taken the lights and ornaments off the tree. The tree has either been boxed up if it is an artificial or taken outside for the trash man if it is a real tree or maybe you have dug a hole in the back yard to plant it. The other assorted items have all been put back into storage awaiting Christmas in 2022.

Today is Epiphany Sunday. The word Epiphany is a Greek word meaning the manifestation of a divine or supernatural being. The only divine and supernatural being that I know of is God. During the Sunday of Epiphany, we celebrate God becoming one of us. The Bible refers to this form of God as Jesus. If we remember **Luke 1:30-31**, the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a son and she was to name the baby Jesus. Through this season of Epiphany, we are going to learning about the manifestation of Jesus.

The season of Epiphany begins on January 6 and lasts until Ash Wednesday. Epiphany is celebrated in many countries as the Gentile Christmas. Who were the first humans outside of Mary and Joseph to see Jesus? The answer is shepherds. These shepherds were of Jewish heritage. Gentiles did not see Jesus until the wise men from the East came (**Matthew 2:1**). That occurred when Jesus was 2 years old.

Let us pray.

The wise men did not use Google maps, or who knows where they might have ended up. These wise men used something that has been used for ages, a star (**Matthew 2:2**). Now you might think that a star is not very reliable. With our computers and modern guidance systems of today, we can get anywhere in the world. Long before people had computers and modern guidance systems they used stars. As a matter of fact, the oldest known people to use star navigation are the Maori dating back to 1300 BC. They used stars to navigate from eastern Polynesia to New Zealand. They crossed the great Pacific Ocean guided by the stars. You are talking a distance of approximately 1200 miles. You might not know it today, but aircraft pilots are taught star navigation so that if the computers and modern guidance systems fail, they can still safely get to their destination.

Of course, there are two problems with star navigation, cloudy nights and daytime. When the Israelite people left Egypt, God knew that they were going to need guidance. So, God provided guidance for them in both the night and the daytime. Look at **Exodus 13: 21-22**.

These wise men were following the star, so they had to rest in the daytime or on cloudy nights. So, they would often stay where they were or in towns. So, they have come to Jerusalem to rest for the day.

They also come to Jerusalem, because this is where the king resided. Surely, he would know who this newborn king is and the location of this newborn king. As we see in scripture, King Herod does not (**Luke 2:3-8**).

As the wise men are continuing their journey in the direction of Bethlehem, the star appears (**Luke 2:9**) Seeing the star brought them great joy (**Luke 2:10**) It confirmed that they were on the right path way to find this king. Sure enough they completed their journey and found the Christ child (**Luke 2:11**). The Gentiles had come to worship the Son of God, Savior of the world, Jesus. Merry Christmas!

I want to just back up a little bit. Kent County High School has a planetarium. I have been in this planetarium as a student, Boy Scout Leader, and parent. During Christmas, the teacher at the time, Dennis Seip, would show how the stars looked on that Christmas night long ago. He would point to various stars with his light pointer, including the star that is believed to be the one the wise men followed. I could not pick that star out from the billions upon billions of heavenly bodies shining in the night sky. How these wise men were able to do it is a great mystery to me today.

These wise men, through all their knowledge and understanding, were guided by God through the light of this one star to the king. Not just any king. Not just king of the Jews. Not just king of the Gentiles. But king of all the world. They were guided by the light.

One of the metaphors that the Bible uses to describe God is light. There are over 170 verses in the Bible that says that God is light. I want to just read a few: **Psalm 27:1, John 1:1-5, and 1 John 1:5-9**.

As we have begun the year of 2022, let us complete two tasks every day. The first task is to follow the light, to follow God. Do not be distracted by all the other lights, but focus on God each and every day. The second task is to share the light, to tell others about God. As I was thinking about this, God gave me a vision. I noticed that on Christmas Eve as the light of the candle was passed from one person to another person. The light from the original candle was not diminished in any way. Instead the more that the light was passed, the more the light from the candle glowed. The more candles that were lit, the more the sanctuary glowed.

The more that we follow God and share God's love, the more our community is going to glow. Let us be guided by The Light of God and share His love. Amen.