

“Another Way”

Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany Sunday: January 3, 2010

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Another way. Let’s go home another way. Why? Because it is more interesting. Not from Bethlehem. You go home another way in case Herod meets you while he is bent on murdering the young child you’ve just been to see. You’re glad to go home another way. Your life might depend on it.

In a little while you will come to the chancel area to take Holy Communion. You will come up to receive Communion by the center aisle. You will go back to your pew by a side aisle. You will go back “another way.” Hopefully, you will also go back another person because God’s grace has touched your life anew. You may feel the same, but there will be a difference.

After what they had seen, I am inclined to think that the wise men felt that nothing would ever be the same again. They wouldn’t be the same. The world wouldn’t be the same. They had seen the Christ. I want to believe that the same holds true for you and me. We will see the living Christ in the sacrament. In the taking of the bread and the cup we will feed on Christ in our hearts by faith and with thanksgiving. We can’t be the same again. Will anyone notice?

Did anyone notice anything about the wise men when they got back to their own country? Back to the “same old, same old”: same old street, same old family, same old friends, same old work, same old problems, same old temptations, same old religion. Call me naïve, if you will, but I’m hoping that people did notice something different about the wise men ...something perhaps that the wise men may not have been able to explain.

It wasn’t just the excitement of hearing all about their journey as they followed a bright star in the East ...as they researched what this astronomical wonder meant. The trip took two years ...across 600 miles of desert, across the Euphrates River ...then there was the visit to Herod’s palace and the disappointment. After that came the next phase: the obscure little Judean town called Bethlehem, the smelly stable at the back of an inn filled with animals, the

manger, the faces of a mother and a father, and the baby boy. No, they themselves were different. No one can be the same when they receive what the wise men received. And what they received, or more accurately, whom they received was the Christ – Jesus, the Savior of the world.

God grant us the faith to believe that Christ changes our vision about life, about the world, about our nation, about Thomasville, about our job, about our family, about our church, about people around us, about our problems, about our particular challenges. After seeing the Christ, we are sent home “another way” in the sense of seeing things differently ...of seeing the same old things in “another way” or a different light. We have a new perspective. Ask the wise men as they returned – returned by another way – returned to another vision of what life was all about. Ask us in a few minutes after we have taken to heart the renewal of our Covenant in the Wesleyan Tradition in this service ...ask us if we are not returning to our places by another way: with renewed vision of who we are and what we are about ...with the promise and expectation of a new start to an old life. Ask us!

This New Year offers a unique opportunity for a new beginning, a fresh start, in our spiritual lives. Each Sunday we have a choice as we come to worship: we can come and go without bending our knee and offering our gifts to the Christ Child; we can avoid noticing Christ; and, of course, nothing will happen. Or ...we can see the star in the East, follow that star to the place where the Christ Child is, be filled with joy, bow down and worship the Lord, give him our gifts, and return home another way.

We come today on this Epiphany Sunday with the wise men. We see the Christ in the breaking of the bread and drinking from the cup. We will go home with the wise men “another way.” We will start this New Year with renewed commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of all life, and people will notice a difference. We will not be the same again. We will have gone home “another way.”

Let’s make this our New Year’s resolution: to be led by a star ...to kneel and adore the Christ Child each week ...to experience an “epiphany” each Sunday ...and to leave by another way to live and work to God’s praise and glory. If we follow this resolution, we will

find that after worship we will always be different ...we will always return home by another way: the way of inner strength, the way of joy, and the way of a Christ-filled life.

As with gladness men of old

Did the guiding star behold;

As with joy they hailed its light,

Leading onward, beaming bright;

So, most gracious Lord, may we

Evermore be led to Thee.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.