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January 5th, 2025

Scripture: Matthew 2: 1-12

Sermon Title: Hearts Like the Magi

Prayer...

Introduction:

Good to tell the story of Epiphany each year. Epiphany means revealed. Jesus is revealed to the Magi. One of the stories we tell every year including birth of Jesus, and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

A Few reminders of this story:

The Magi went on a pilgrimage to visit the infant Jesus. We do not know much about these astrologers. They came from the East.

Some say from the land of Persia. Magi is a Latin word meaning among other things magician.

We do not know how many Magi traveled to meet Jesus. Tradition gave them the names Balthasar, Melchior, and Caspar. Although scholars no longer assume they were kings, according to Western church tradition, Balthasar is often represented as a king of Arabia or sometimes Ethiopia, Melchior as a king of Persia, and Caspar as a king of India. I appreciate that tradition offers a multi-ethnic image of the Magi. According to tradition, they were not white Europeans but multi-ethnic travelers from foreign lands.

They are also described as Eastern priest-sages usually associated with the area near Babylon and they were said to look into the mysteries of the universe through astronomy, astrology, and natural sciences.

In the ancient Middle Eastern world these Magi were trusted advisors to kings, were learned men proficient in the knowledge of mathematical calculations, astronomy, medicine, astrology,

alchemy, dream interpretation and history as well as practitioners of magic and paranormal arts.

The Magi gave gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh to Jesus.

Scholars debate how to interpret the meaning of these gifts. What we do know is that they demonstrate valuable gifts and show the respect that the Magi have for the child Jesus?

I want to highlight a few key insights from the story of the Magi that I think we can appreciate today.

They follow a star:

- Significance of the star as a connection to God's revelation through nature.
- Signifies that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness.

Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the revelation of God.

They are spiritual people but gentiles:

- We are reminded that Jesus is the Lord of all nations. Jesus wants to be revealed to all people.
- The Magi reminds me of spiritual people that are not necessarily from our own exact faith background, but who are drawn to Jesus and embody his love in the world.
- Example: New Age Spirituality- My sister.
- Example: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
- Example: The Magi and the story of Mary and Joseph and Jesus also remind us of the experience of immigrants and refugees.
- This connection was highlighted last Friday at our recent prayer retreat by Toby Linn. Toby and his wife Lisa are regular attenders of our church and are former professors at George Fox University and they also have extensive ministry experience, including years of working for World Vision International, in places like Taiwan and Spain. I would like to

have Toby come up and share about how our Scripture story today spoke to him personally....

- As we reflect on the story of the Magi today, I want to leave us with one more thought.

- Let us have hearts like the Magi and like Mary and Joseph.

Open hearts to Jesus and open hearts to people who are on a spiritual journey that might be different from our own but that are open to God.

- Let us also have open hearts to immigrants including refugees who are seeking a place to call home without prejudice or judgement.

The church welcomes all and seeks all to know the revelation of Jesus. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is like the star that led the Magi. In Jesus we see the light and love we all seek. May we have open hearts like the Magi, so that we may experience the revelation of Jesus in a fresh way this New Year. AMEN

Matthew 2:1-15

The Visit of the Magi

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east[b] and have come to pay him homage.” 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah[c] was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘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[d] my people Israel.’ ”

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi[e] and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 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.” 9 When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east,[f] until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped,[g] they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 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. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Escape to Egypt

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” 14 Then Joseph[h] got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”