

Matthew 2: 1-12

After Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** in Judea, during the time of King **Herod**, **Magi** from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s **chief priests and teachers of the law**, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the **star** they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the **child** with his mother **Mary**, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their **treasures** and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Meditation

In a metaphysical reading of this passage, we’re invited to recognize ourselves in all of it: we are Bethlehem, the place where the incarnation of the Holy One is found; and we are

that incarnation of the child of God; we are Mary saying yes to the mystery; Joseph saying yes to loving beyond his understanding; we are the light of the star and the wise ones who followed it; we are the treasure offered; and we are Herod, fearful and disturbed, clutching power instead of vulnerability.

And so we breathe in and breathe out, and we notice where we are today, in this moment, in this ongoing revelation of the Holy Mystery...

Like the wise ones...we journey into the unknown.... at times overwhelmed with joy...other times overwhelmed.... and stunned as the road we're on becomes another road...

into the stillness now, bring to your mind and heart... a recognition, a knowing of where you are on your journey, at this very moment... or perhaps recall a time of overwhelming joy... or a time when the road before you felt blocked and full of warning...

Breathing in... and out...center your heart...come into awareness of the Christ within...breathe in awareness...breathe out light...witness your own seeking...see how you are called to follow the star of Divine wisdom...

Breathing in... and out... feel your sacred inner light... is it soft as a candle flame, radiant as shining as the sun... warm as a fire burning at your hearth... you **are** light... and so it is.

Inspiration for Message:

Back to my questions that frame today's message: In today's time of Herod, how do we follow the star of wisdom? How do we hold our holy heartbreak and discern our way home to the sacred truth that we are called to be blessings? How do we arise and walk forth, traveling a road of hope, peace and compassion?

Our full humanity *and* our divine light is revealed in each element of this familiar story of the Magi from Matthew. And here is this wisdom from Joseph Yoo, an Episcopal priest that broke through my doomscrolling: ([Gifts of the magi](#)) He begins by pointing out that Matthew never actually tells us how many magi there are—we assume three because of the number of gifts. Matthew “isn’t interested in a headcount”— he is interested in what the three gifts reveal.

There's gold, the gift for the king but not the kind of King we're used to or maybe even want. This isn't dominance or control. This king isn't found in a palace... he's found in a house, ordinary, vulnerable. So gold doesn't point us toward chasing power. It confronts how we use it. The king rules by drawing near, by giving himself away, by refusing to dominate.

Then there's frankincense... a worship gift that says God isn't distant, isn't abstract. God isn't locked behind religion or morality or perfection. God is close—in real bodies, in real relationships, in the mess of real life, which means faith can't stay theoretical. It has to show up.

But then there's myrrh, the gift nobody wants to talk about because myrrh is used for burial. From the very beginning Jesus's story includes suffering. Not because suffering is good. Not because God wants pain but because love that refuses to abandon the world will eventually be wounded by it.

If you keep gold but lose the myrrh you get meaning without cost. If you keep frankincense but lose the gold, you get spirituality without responsibility. If you keep myrrh without the others you get suffering without hope. But when you hold the three together you see the fullness of Jesus's life and mission. A love that shows up. A love that stays close. A love that doesn't turn away. Following this kind of Jesus doesn't make life safer but it does make it truer.

Those who wield power-over– the cruel, tyrannical Herods– in the time of Jesus, and through the centuries, and those with us today– have always wreaked havoc, chaos, pain. But that is not, and never has been, the full story, no matter how bleak these days might feel. Because into that power-over comes again, and again, the power of love.

And into that love, here *we* are. We are those who see the “fullness of Jesus’ life and mission.” We are those who know our work is the same whether we face the first day of the apocalypse or the first day of the golden age, as Ram Dass taught. We those who recognize the work of Christmas begins as finding the lost, healing the broken, rebuilding the nations, as Howard Thurman taught in the poem we heard last week.

What is keeping *you* from fully becoming the treasure that you were created to be? We are called to ARISE and WALK FORTH AS LIGHT, to offer the gift of our presence, our inner divine light, in the mess, in the joys, in ways small and tender, and in ways that ask us to love beyond our comfort zone. Grow community. Grow an herb garden on a windowsill. Call your elected officials or call a friend. Show up in your own way. Listen to the attunement of Love’s voice whispering. Discern the meaning of YOUR gifts– and offer them freely, to the world that so clearly needs them. And so it is. Amen.

The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

