

EPIPHANY 2008

Matthew 2:1-12

Astrologers from the east arrived one day in Jerusalem inquiring.

A FAMILY WAS DRIVING THROUGH KANSAS ON VACATION.

FIVE YEAR OLD TYLER WAS LOOKING OUT THE CAR WINDOW.
BOY, HE SAID, IT IS SO FLAT OUT THERE,

YOU CAN LOOK FARTHER THAN YOU CAN SEE.

THAT IS A GREAT PHRASE:

YOU CAN LOOK FARTHER THAN YOU CAN SEE.

IN THE EARLY 1930's AN ENGINEER NAMED JOSEPH STRAUSS

LOOKED OVER SAN FRANCISCO BAY.

IN HIS MIND HE FORMED A PICTURE OF A BEAUTIFUL BRIDGE

CONNECTING THE TWO SIDES OF THE BAY.

IN 1936 THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE BECAME A REALITY.

HE LOOKED FARTHER THAN HE COULD SEE.

READING THE NEWS IT IS OBVIOUS THAT

THE WORLD NEEDS A NEW VISION.

CRITICS OF THE WAR IN IRAQ CLAMOR FOR A VISION

OF HOW TO EXTRICATE OURSELVES

HONORABLY FROM THIS BLOODY CONFLICT.

ALL OF US LOOK AT THE CHALLENGE OF TERRORISM

AND LONG FOR A VISION, A CURE

FOR THIS DEADLY SCOURGE.

PEOPLE OF CONSCIENCE LOOK AT OUR PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
AND CRY FOR A NEW VISION OF HOW TO CARE
FOR THE UNINSURED.

SCIENTISTS LOOK AT THE TROUBLING SIGNS OF GLOBAL WARMING
AND SEARCH FOR A WAY OF AVOIDING A CRISIS.

MANY OF US LONG FOR A VISION
THAT WILL AGAIN UNITE US AS A PEOPLE, PARISH, COUNTRY.

MANY OF US NEED A NEW VISION FOR OUR PERSONAL LIVES.

SOME OF US ARE BOGGED DOWN IN A SEA OF GUILT AND REGRET.

OTHERS FEEL THAT SOMETHING IS MISSING FROM OUR LIVES.

IF ONLY WE COULD SEE SOMETHING

THAT WE HAVE NOT SEEN BEFORE.

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I MEAN BY "VISION".

IF I WERE TO SHOW YOU A PILE OF SCRAP CARDBOARD,

OLD CAR PARTS,

USED TIRES

AND OTHER CASTS OFF,

WHAT WOULD YOU SEE?

JUNK YARD?

TRASH HEAP

EYE SORE.

YET, THERE WAS AN ARTICLE IN TIME MAGAZINE, A FEW YEARS BACK,

WHERE A PROFESSOR AT AUBORN UNIVERSITY

WHO WHEN HE LOOKED AT THOSE SAME ITEMS
SAW NEW HOMES.

PROFESSOR SAMUAL MOCKBEE

IS THE VISIONARY BEHIND AN ARCHITECTURE FIRM
THAT SPECIALIZES IN MAKING

LOVELY, FUNCTIONAL LOST-COST HOMES

FOR POOR RESIDENTS IN ALABAMA.

MOCKBEE AND HIS STUDENTS MAKE THESE LOVELY BUILDINGS
OUT OF TRASH.

THAT IS THE POWER OF VISION.

NOTHING HAPPENS WITHOUT VISION.

THE WORLD, OUR PARISH, YOUR FAMILY

HUNGERS FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOOK FARTHER THAN THEY CAN SEE.

THIS SUNDAY WE CELEBRATE THOSE PERSONS FROM THE EAST
WHO WERE SEARCHERS,

PEOPLE WHO WERE LOOKING FARTHER THAN THEY COULD SEE.

EPIPHANY, IN OUR SECULAR LANGUAGE,

IS DEFINED AS: A NEW WAY OF SEEING OR UNDERSTANDING.

LIKE THE MAGI OF OLD,

WE NEED TO OPEN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS

TO STRETCH OUR IMAGINATIONS.

THE STATESMAN KONRAD ADENAUER PUT IT THIS WAY:

“WE ALL LIVE UNDER THE SAME SKY,
BUT WE DO NOT ALL
HAVE THE SAME HORIZON.”

DID YOU COME SEARCHING THIS MORNING,
OR HAVE YOU FOUND ALL THAT YOU NEED
IN YOUR NEW i-POD?
YOUR WORK?
YOUR FAMILY?
A NEW HOBBY?

ARE YOU SO CONTENT WITH THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD
THAT YOU NO LONGER HUNGER
FOR A FRESH ENCOUNTER WITH GOD?

GOD LOVES SEARCHERS?

THE MAGI WERE SEARCHERS!

**THEY WERE SEARCHERS WHO SET OUT
ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH.**

THAT IS IMPORTANT.

THERE ARE MANY JOURNEYS PEOPLE TAKE.

SOME PEOPLE JOURNEY INTO ALTERNATIVE LIFE-STYLES,

SOME JOURNEY INTO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.

MANY PEOPLE ARE TAKING DESTRUCTIVE JOURNEYS
IN OUR WORLD TODAY,

FOLLOWING SO MANY FALSE STARS.

DID YOU SEE THE PICTURE IN THE REGISTER LAST WEEK

OF THE ROBOT PLANES

THAT ARE BEING USED IN THE WAR.

A FEW YEARS BACK

ONE OF THESE PLANES WAS LOST IN A FREAK ACCIDENT.

NO, IT DID NOT CRASH INTO A MOUNTAIN

IT DID NOT RUN OUT OF GAS

NOR DID ONE OF ITS PARTS FAIL.

RATHER IT COMMITTED SUICIDE.

IT SHUT DOWN ITS ENGINES,

ERASED CLASSIFIED MATERIAL FROM ITS COMPUTER

SET ITS FLAPS IN A DEATH SPIRAL

AND SMASHED INTO THE GROUND.

HERE IS WHAT HAPPENED.

MORE THAN 100 MILES AWAY,

A TEAM OF AIR FORCE PERSONNEL WERE TESTING ANOTHER

GLOBAL HAWK AIRCRAFT.

AT SOMETIME IN THE TEST,

THEY TOLD THIS SECOND AIRPLANE TO TERMINATE ITS FLIGHT.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE FIRST PLANE "OVERHEARD" THIS SIGNAL

AND THOUGHT THAT IT WAS BEING ORDERED TO TERMINATE

ITS FLIGHT,

AND IT DID JUST THAT.

A PLANE WAS LOST

BECAUSE IT LISTENED TO THE WRONG VOICE.

THERE ARE MANY JOURNEYS WE CAN TAKE IN TODAY'S WORLD,

MANY VOICES TO LISTEN TO,

MANY STARS THAT WE CAN FOLLOW.

BUT ONLY ONE LEADS US INTO THE PATH OF ABUNDANT LIFE.

I WANT TO CHALLENGE YOU TODAY

TO SET OUT ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH IN THIS NEW YEAR.

GET DEEP INTO OUR FAITH.

COME TO ADVENTURES IN FAITH

SPEND MORE TIME IN PRAYER.

FOCUS MORE INTENTLY IN WORSHIP

ON GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE.

THE MAGI WERE SEARCHERS

WHO WERE ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH.

THEIR GOAL WAS TO BOW BEFORE THE NEWBORN KING.

THE BOWED DOWN BEFORE HIM

DID HIM HOMAGE

AND OFFERED HIM GIFTS.

THESE WERE EXPENSIVE GIFTS.

MAYBE THAT IS WHY TRADITION CALLS THEM THE 3 KINGS.

SOME HAVE TREATED THESE GIFTS AS SYMBOLIC:

GOLD TO REPRESENT HIS KINGSHIP
MYRRH TO REPRESENT HIS DEATH
INCENSE, AS HOMAGE TO GOD.
PERHAPS, WE DO NOT KNOW
NOR DO WE KNOW THAT BECAME OF THE GIFTS.
THE BIBLE DOES NOT SAY.
AND IT DOES NOT MATTER.
THESE GIFTS REPRESENT,
MOST OF ALL,
THE MAGI'S DEVOTION.
THEY GAVE OF THEMSELVES.
HERE IS THE KEY TO LIFE.
GIVE OF YOURSELF.
GIVE OF YOURSELF TO GOD
GIVE OF YOURSELF TO OTHERS.

THERE IT IS
EPIPHANY.
SEEING LIFE WITH NEW EYES.
VISION.
THAT IS WHAT I WISH FOR EACH OF US THIS DAY.
THE MAGI CAME SEARCHING.

THEIR SEARCH TOOK THEM ON A JOURNEY OF FAITH.
WHEN THEY FOUND THE NEWBORN KING
THEY OFFERED HIM GIFTS,
GIFTS THAT REPRESENTED THE BEST THAT WAS IN THEM.
THIS IS THE KIND OF VISION WE NEED
AS WE BEGIN THIS NEW YEAR.
TO HELP YOU THINK ABOUT IT –
I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT
WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE TO SAY ABOUT ST. MARY’S.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE VISITORS TO SAY
TO YOU ABOUT OUR CHURCH –
THAT IT IS BEAUTIFUL, SURE.
BUT WHAT ELSE:
THAT WE ARE REVERENT
THAT WE SING WELL
THAT WE GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO GREET ONE ANOTHER
THAT WE HAVE A DEEP CARE FOR THE SICK, THE NEEDY
WHAT DO YOU AND I ENVISION ST. MARY’S TO BE –
THINK HARD ABOUT THIS WILL YOU?
PRAY HARD ABOUT THIS WILL YOU?
FOR HOW WE ANSWER THIS QUESTION
WILL DETERMINE WHO WE ARE TRYING TO BECOME,
AND EVENTUALLY WILL BECOME.