

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon January 2nd, 2022

God Our Guide

Today we recognize the day of Epiphany, which is technically on the 6th of January. Today, we gather together to hear the second Christmas story. Part II, which doesn't get as much publicity as part I does. Like a lot of sequels (**Image**).

In the first Christmas Story we see humble shepherds, a choir of angels, the baby Jesus lying in a manger, and barn animals. In the sequel, we see Magi. We see a bright star. We see gifts of Frankincense, gold, and myrrh. We see a king who feels threatened by this new born king, and so, does everything in his power to get rid of this future king.

Two stories that are very different from one another. One speaks to the Gentile community. The other speaks to the people of Israel. One focuses on the poor. The other focuses on the wealthy. In the one Mary is the main character. In the other Joseph and Herod are the main characters. They are two very different Christmas stories that are both read during our Christmas season. One at the beginning, and the other at the end.

Pop culture has blended the two stories together into one (**Image**). I am not going to do that this morning. Though I do want to highlight a common theme that exists in these diverse stories. And that is: God is our guide.

In the first Christmas story, God comes to Mary through the angel Gabriel to give her guidance on becoming the mother of the Messiah. God then comes to the Shepherds through a choir of angels to guide them to the manger where they will bear witness to this future Messiah.

In the second Christmas story, the one we hear this morning, God uses a star to guide the Magi to the house where Jesus is staying. God then guides the Magi home safely by warning them in a dream about Herod's intentions.

In Luke's gospel, God likes to use angels as a guide for the people. In Matthew's gospel, God uses stars and dreams as a guide for the people.

When I reflect on the star of Bethlehem, I remember the days of being a Beaver. I remember one time before going on a camping trip, that I was told that if I get lost all I need to do is find the North star (**Image**). This star will help direct me back to camp.

With google maps we no longer need to rely so much on compasses or stars to find our destinations. Except when we can't get a cell signal (**Image**). But, for many years people used stars to find their way to where God was guiding them.

With this theme in mind: In what ways does God guide us today?

For myself, when I need to make a major decision in my life or in my work, I receive a lot of guidance from God when I open up the scriptures (**Image**). I come across a story or a verse that gives me some direction.

As the church, we make major decisions by reflecting on what God is saying to us in the scriptures. Sometimes we disagree on interpreting these scriptures, but we all believe these scriptures are an important way in which God guides us towards a decision.

Sometimes we pray to listen for where God is directing us (**Image**).

Sometimes we discuss our options with others to listen to where God is guiding us (**Image**).

Sometimes we seek out God's guidance in a worship setting. We listen for God's voice in the sermon. We are moved by Christ's presence in the sacrament (**Image**).

Many of our rituals in our faith are ways in which God guide us. As well as stars. Angels. Dreams. People.

God is our guide. And what we find when we listen to God's guidance for our lives is we end up at the manger. We end up at the house of Jesus. We find ourselves standing before the Messiah, the king, experiencing God's redeeming love. Ready to offer our gifts. Ready to go tell it on the mountain (**Image**).

God is our guide. God is our redeemer.

Let us pray, loving God, thank you for your guidance. Thank you for your son who redeems us from our suffering. **Amen.**

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