

WEEKLY SERMON

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Epiphany Homily

Matthew 2: 1 – 12.

Today we're thinking about Epiphany. The time we remember the wise men and their visit to Jesus.

Christmas has come and gone once again, and some may already be thinking about taking the tree and decorations down. And we're left with the reason for it all. We're left with Jesus. And the question offered to us as we enter into the New Year is the same one Jesus put to Peter - the same one that everyone in the gospels has to answer - 'who do you say I am?'

Is he just a nice guy, who did some really great stuff and said some really wise things? Or is he more - is he actually the King of the Universe, the ruler of our hearts; the Prince of Peace, God with us? Is he the one who has come to save us from all our mess and shame and brokenness? Is he pure love in human form?

Who do you say Jesus is?

Because that's a big question, and it might be hard to know what to do with it, the story of the wise men, who were seeking answers to the same question, contains 3 helpful tips for all of us seeking epiphany; seeking an answer to the question, 'who do you say I am?'

The first is, **don't travel alone**. The search for Jesus should be done in community. There is no story of the visit of 'the wise man' who travelled bravely on alone to Bethlehem. There is a story of Wise Men, who travelled together, who figured stuff out together and who came to Jesus together. The same is true for us - as you seek Jesus, do it with others; do it in community. So join a small group, do Alpha, commit to coming to church regularly. Don't travel alone.

Second, **the answers lie in Scripture**. When the wise men arrive in Jerusalem and visit Herod, it's the book of Isaiah that tells them to head a bit further down the road to Bethlehem. If you want to know who Jesus is, you will find all the answers in the bible. And the new year is a good time to commit or to re-commit to regular bible reading. And there are excellent books and apps that can help if you're not sure where to start.

Thirdly, as you seek Jesus, **expect the unexpected**. The wise men thought Jesus would be born in a palace in Jerusalem, when he was actually born in a backwater called Bethlehem. And when they do meet him, it is quickly clear that they need to return home 'by a different way' - they have to follow a different road from now on. Your journey to meeting Jesus and knowing who he really is may well take you to unexpected places, and you may meet him in unexpected people - and when you come to stand before him and see him for who he really is, you will be changed. You will have to return home by a different route.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Three tips from the wise men to you, as you search for your epiphany. – whether it's for the first time, or the hundredth time - for the moment when you say 'ohhh, Jesus, that's who you are!'

Rev Jon Price, Rector of Brindle St James
Start of Ministry Officer for the Diocesan Board of Finance