

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

### People on the Move

Today is Epiphany and having heard the story of the Wise Men who followed the star we might just say, "well, that was really good of these learned people to travel so far, just to see a young king- who wasn't a king! But there is more to this story other than a nice camel journey from the East to the west.

The Bible does not tell us very much about these travellers other than that they studied the stars and ancient texts of various known people's at the time. And so when they noticed a bright star in their western sky they wanted to investigate why it was there. But also when they considered the old texts of the Hebrew faith- the prophets had written about a baby to be born in Bethlehem, who would be the wonderful counsellor, almighty God, prince of peace they had to see this child for themselves.

As shared with the children, the wise men also had faith in God who would send his love in a special way. And traditions from one generation to the next indicate that these wise men were from the eastern nations- of Arabia, Persia and India- but no one knows for sure. Yet they watched for a sign and saw the star and travelled a long way to Jerusalem. There they asked for Jesus and realized that they had to travel further into Bethlehem. They were people on the move because God had shown them a star, a sign by which to say- I have fulfilled my promise in giving my Son to be your Saviour. Go to him, worship him and tell others about him. He will do amazing things!

These wise men and their entourage had a distinct purpose- to find Jesus and worship him, and offer him gifts fit for a king. They were people on the move and once their task was completed they headed back home. But instead of going back through Jerusalem, they went east by another road.

Thinking back through our Canadian history, we can share and tell stories of people who migrated at different times as the country was opening up and needed settlers. People left their home countries for the land of opportunity, and the ability to own land and become prosperous. For many of us here today- your story is uniquely yours as your ancestors came to Canada via the eastern seaports, or through the US borders to settle in this area. Many people travelled the waterways of the Great

Lakes, and then caravans to the west or once rail travel was possible settling further west was a huge choice and commitment. People were on the move then and people are on the move now.

But what makes people move? The wise men were seeking Jesus and once they saw him and worshiped him, they returned home. They were welcomed by Mary and Joseph, thanked for their gifts and then they headed home. Through our Canadian history, people have been on the move since our First Nations people met the first European explorers and this continues now. Migration has been happening since time immemorial and the factors that have shaped migration patterns still have an impact today whether they are push or pull factors.

Push factors cause people to leave because of war, climate change, natural disasters or lack of work. Pull factors are causes as to why someone would travel to another country including an opportunity for work, education or a better standard of living. Other factors- both push/pull are often the result of unfair trade, labour or financial practices between countries.

Our world is filled with people on the move- because circumstances in their homeland force families to leave the familiar and look for a new life. For example, Gabriel lost his job because of a combination of unjust global financing and a natural disaster. Gabriel used to collect and export bananas but after a hurricane the banana farms were destroyed and the fruit was gone. He lost his income and needed to support his family so Gabriel came to Canada as a migrant agriculture worker. For a while he earned money and sent it home and this money is vital not only to their families, but to their countries' economies. He returns home as he is able but still seeks fulltime employment and yearns to live in Canada.

The wise men walked the streets of Jerusalem and asked, 'where is he who is born the king of the jews?' Word got back to King Herod about these foreigners in the land asking for king other than Herod. Herod's response? To kill all boys under the age of 2. Out of fear of relinquishing his power, King Herod ordered innocent children to be killed. One can only imagine the grief of parents as their child was killed or as they try to flee the land. And many did flee the country—including Jesus and his parents, Mary and Joseph. They went to Egypt until such time that it was safe to return to Judea. But here, Joseph now has to find a means to support his family as Mary would stay with Jesus at home. How was Joseph received in this country? Was he respected and given a job or a way to practise his carpentry skills? Were Mary and little Jesus respected at the water well, or the market? Or did people shun them or walk away as they were Judeans in Egypt? We don't know this at all, but we do know that they were a

migrant family in a foreign land, there because of King Herod's orders and yet they knew that they had to keep Jesus safe. Jesus was to be the Saviour of the Jews and is God's Son so they had to travel further away from the familiar and they live in a different country. But when it was deemed safe, they migrated back to their homeland and lived amongst the people who were similar in faith and culture.

As we explore the "Light of a Star" we need to be reminded of our need to respect others- in our midst in this church family, in our worship experiences, in our times of sharing together, and even when we leave this place and go to our places of work, and leisure. We are to respect others as Jesus, Mary and Joseph respected and welcomed the Wise Men to their home, just as they were welcomed and respected in Egypt. How we show respect- is most easily done through a bow or handshake but most effectively a smile.

We are called to reflect the light of a star that shone when Jesus was born. We are called to shine for him and be reflective of his actions- and this is welcoming others in Jesus' name and telling others of your life and who you are in this church family, a faithful child of God.

When we think of people on the move—we too are moving as well! We are moving closer to being like Jesus every day we turn to the Bible and read the way of faithful service and when we pray for others, our world and ourselves. We are moving closer to Christ as we answer his call and move to share in the work of respecting others wherever we are. We are moving forward in faith so that when we see Christ's light- we will know and can offer God our praise and thanks giving for we are followers in faith and have hope. We are people on the move, because the Spirit of God is moving us to respect others as people who seek a good life. In response, and in Jesus' name we respond to the Spirit's call so that we will share in actions that show our love and are just.

This season of and after Epiphany urges us to search for Jesus, to discover Jesus' character and identity more deeply so that our relationship grows more deeply and He becomes more than a baby in a manger, more than a child who receives gifts and more than the Mary and Joseph's son. Jesus is the Son of God and through the light of a star and by faith, Jesus becomes our Saviour. Thanks be to God. Amen.

#### PRAYER

Holy God, we praise you and thank you for the Light that shone in the sky signifying Christ's birth. Help us to see that this Light still shines in the hearts of those who believe. Help us also to respect those who seek you and to discover more about your love in faith and with hope. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.