

Sunday January 2, 2022 Christmas2 "The Light of Christ Shines"

Isaiah 60:1-6 Matthew 2:1-12

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! It is 2022 and a year of new beginnings, hopes and wonder! It is also a time to reflect on the past year's events, newsworthy items and maybe take time to do a crossword puzzle or two! This week the Windsor Star published a giant crossword puzzle with clues and answers featuring the newsmakers of 2021 - everyone from pop music stars to Nobel prize winners as well as specific words used throughout the year. Trying this puzzle is an exercise in remembering the stories of the past year and their impact on the life of many others.

As we begin 2022, let us take time to reassess our situations and look to what we need as a means of carrying us forward in faith. We have celebrated Jesus birth in the stable with Mary and Joseph and the animals. We heard the story of angels telling the shepherds to see the baby. They worshiped him and then shouted out the news to others. But as we continue on this Second Sunday of Christmas leading towards Epiphany, what are we seeking? Is what we are looking for today any different from what and for whom the Wise Men were searching? The Christmas story tells of the birth of the baby Jesus in a stable. But, Mary and Joseph do not live in the stable but search out a place to live for a while in the community where they are now registered citizens.

When Jesus was born, a bright star appeared in the sky and it was visible to anyone who looked up. The travelers from the East saw it and wanted to pay homage to the One who was born king of the Jews. They had followed the star to where the child was in the Judean area but were not sure exactly where to go.

In asking about the child in Jerusalem, word on the street was that these strangers were searching for a newborn king. This message was sent to King Herod, and when he heard this, he was frightened about his position. He called the chief priests and scribes and asked them about this Messiah of the Jewish people. The priests and scribes knowing the scripture references for the promised messiah told the King in Judea, in Bethlehem. He called for these strangers in the city to meet with him. They did and he asked when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem to search for the child. He also told them to let him know so that he too could go and recognize the child. The wise men, followed the star again and it lead them to where the child was. Their journey had been long—from the time they saw the bright star to seeing the child in a house.

We often see images of the wise men at the stable—but this is not accurate because they would have only seen the star the night Jesus was born. Traveling took time and of course Joseph and Mary would not have lived in a barn. They found some kind of housing as Mary would not be able to travel nor would the baby. And so the star rests over where Jesus was- not a newborn but a child. They were overwhelmed as they had arrived at their destination. They were filled with joy and then they entered the house and saw Mary and Joseph with the young boy. They knelt down and paid him homage or worshiped him. Showed him respect as the One born to save the Jews, the promised messiah was in front of them.

They then presented him with gifts fit for a king of an older age—gold, frankincense and myrrh. Symbols of their wealth, offered with love to the One who would die for others. For these were also gifts given as one prepared for death—spices and oil for burial and the gold to cover the cost. We do not know how Mary and Joseph responded to this offering of gifts but they now knew that their son's life would touch the lives of people nearby and far away; poor and rich alike.

The wise men left them and found a place to rest for the night. We do not know where but they did sleep and they were warned in their sleep not to return to King Herod. They knew how to go home a different way and so they followed that path as the stars laid it out. The Christ Messiah was born for the Jews, yet now the world was starting to receive Jesus as the Promised one for these wise men knew of his birth and worshiped him for who he was and who he was to become.

Christmas has passed for another year—but I ask you- did Jesus or God's Spirit come to where you were? Or was the Spirit searching for you and the door to your heart closed? One can only imagine Mary and Joseph's shock as they answered their door to see Wise Men, people from a different culture, race and weary camels and a caravan of support and supplies. Yet they also knew that God counted on them to care for the infant as this baby was not theirs alone—He is God's Son and He needed to be trained and taught the ways of people of faith.

We too are people of faith and so often we need to be reminded of the core teachings of Christianity. Jesus is the promised one of God sent to redeem and save us from sin and ultimately receive the gift of eternal life. But how often do we really think about his for our own life?

We are in the early days of this 2022. We cannot do too much because everything is closed down, or limited in access for basic needs but there is something that we can do. And

that is take a minute to think, reclaim creativity and to relax for a moment. We can also remember this past year's events—positive and negative; the joy and celebration, the sad moments and wonders of life and death and our future. We can also look at date books, calendars and even the Christmas tree lights as they shine brightly on houses, trees and inside homes. And we can look at those empty boxes on the calendar and stop for a moment.

The wise men travelled a great distance to see a child. How many times in their journey through the desert did they want to stop? But, instead of stopping they looked up and saw the star guiding them – day and night. We may not have Christ's star shining in the night every night, but we do have Christ's light shining= in us. That is, if we believe that the baby born at Christmas is Jesus the Promised Son of God, we can know that his Light causes us to lighten up and do what God calls us to do. This is what we need right now- a time that is a strategic pause in between the beats of life which will slowly move forward this week. In this time we will be able to access those empty boxes of the time and use it for thinking, reflection, rest and creativity. We can also use it to plan for the year ahead and to dream.

As faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we believe he is born for us, he lives in us and will always be with us. We just need to let him in and let our light shine for him—telling others of his love for us all. As we celebrate this Second Sunday of Christmas let us rejoice for God's gift to us shines brightly within us. Christ's light shines because we believe in his presence within us.

Jesus is the light of world—and we know that right now- many things in this world have darkened our thoughts and even our outlook towards this new year. But if we truly follow Christ's light, let him speak to us through the Bible, through the words of others and by the Spirit, we will refocus our lives and live out our lives as children of faith and God's followers in hope.

Let us remember this as we pray

God whose Son came to us at Christmas we praise you for who you are and can be in our lives. In these dark wintry days, shine your light in our hearts as we profess our faith and love for you.

Show us your grace and love O God as we continue to search for Christ Jesus to lead and guide our lives. Hear us O God as we pray. Amen.

Philippians 4:6–7 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.