



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

As I read today's scripture I heard the words of two carols... "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "We Three Kings." Both carols were composed in the mid-nineteenth century, but they reflect the words of the first century gospels. We hear "the everlasting light... the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." Here the light is the Christ child, the fulfillment of Micah 5:2. The arrival of the magi, possessors of mysterious wisdom, at King Herod's court in Jerusalem reflect their observance of a heavenly star which they understand to be an indication of a newborn king of the Jews. They don't find the newborn king in King Herod's court. King Herod and everyone in Jerusalem are troubled by the information brought by these gentiles. Tradition tells us that there were three magi because they came bearing three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gentiles reflect the coming of the nations to worship the newborn king. As we follow the story of King Herod, getting details about the timing of the appearance of the star and giving them instructions to go to Bethlehem to search for this newborn king, we find God using powerful dreams yet again to protect the child. In a dream, the magi are warned not to return to Herod but to use a different route. Joseph has a dream to save the child from Herod by escaping to Egypt. Matthew's gospel frequently reflects the power of dreams for Jews as well as gentiles.

Consider the Source Matthew 2:1-5a, 7-12

In our own day, we also have hopes and dreams for peace and safety for all the nations of God's world. Do you ask God to help you understand your own dreams and what actions He wishes for you to take to bring about a more peaceful and safe world? We don't all have such meaningful dreams, but some people still experience such dreams. We need to be ready to greet the *magi* God sends to us. Who do you know that you believe possesses mysterious wisdom? I believe that God has recently sent some magi in my own life. Perhaps he has sent some into yours as well. Joseph and the magi were open to God's powerful dreams as they struggled to understand the events in their lives. We, too, need to be alert to how God is bringing powerful hopes and dreams into our own world.

— Myra Schomburg, First Church member

A Family Affair

Read Matthew 2 together as a family and talk about the magi (wise men). The scripture tells us that the magi knelt to worship the Baby Jesus and brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. While you may be familiar with gold, frankincense and myrrh are probably unfamiliar substances. They are both prized for their desirable fragrance. Sometimes they were used as medicine but often they were used in religious ceremonies. All the magi brought valuable gifts when they came to worship Jesus.

Discuss with your family what kind of gifts we can offer to Jesus today. We may not have gold, frankincense or myrrh but we can still offer Jesus important gifts. Each week, children are invited to give an offering in Sunday School to support various missions for children. In addition, children are invited to participate in worship with their families each week. Finally, children are invited to give their witness by telling others about Jesus. Have you ever invited a friend to attend Sunday School, Vacation Bible School or J-team with you? What about sharing Jesus' love with a friend at school?

Dear God, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Help us to remember that we, like the magi, can bring important gifts to him throughout this year. In Jesus' name, Amen.

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

Monday: Matthew 2:1-2

These verses put specific information about the time and place of Christ's birth as well as introducing us to the magi.

- How can we notice the signs of God's continuing work in our lives? Be still, pay attention, listen.

Tuesday: Matthew 2:3-5a

King Herod is troubled by the arrival and information the magi share with him. Leaders are often fearful of events they do not understand. King Herod consults the religious and historical experts.

- Who do our leaders consult to understand current events?

Wednesday: Matthew 2:7-8

Herod gets more information from the magi and sends them to find the child and return to him with their findings so he, too, can honor the child.

- How many times are we presented with instructions that we find out may put others in danger?

Thursday: Matthew 2:9-11

The magi see the star again and are filled with joy. They are led to the house where Jesus and Mary are living. We don't have the details of how old the child is, but it was most likely several days if not weeks after the birth.

- How often do we continue to be filled with joy for weeks after our holiday celebrations?
- Do you gain more joy from the gifts you give or the gifts you receive?

Friday: Matthew 1:19-21, 2:12-14, 19

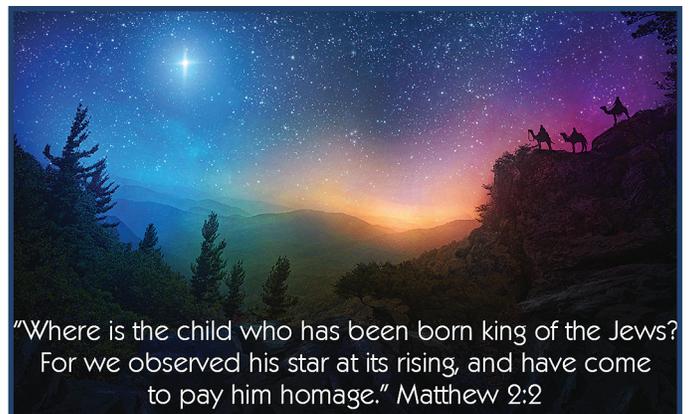
God communicates with Joseph and the magi in dreams.

- How open are you to your own dreams?
- Do you believe God is still communicating with us this way?

Saturday: Epiphany – Isaiah 60:1-6

This scripture shares the prophecy of the coming of the Lord's Light to the Jewish nation as well as the world's response to that Light.

- What is the brightest spot in your own home? Enjoy that spot and feel the Presence of the Lord in your heart and mind. Be still, pay attention, listen.



"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." Matthew 2:2