

“WHERE IS HE?”

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

*As with gladness men of old, did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward beaming bright,
So, most gracious Lord, may we, evermore your followers be. Amen*

A pastor was called to a member’s home after the sudden death of the member’s son. As he stepped onto the porch, the pastor was greeted by an angry father who shouted, **“Where was God when my son died, Pastor?”** The pastor paused a moment gathering his thoughts & asking God to give him the right words to say. He took a deep breath and then softly responded, **“God was in the same place He was when His Son died!”**

We all experience tragic struggles and internal conflicts that cause us to ask: **“Where is God?”** Sensing our Father’s absence in the midst of life’s burdens cares, and worries puts our faith to the test, leads us to question our faith, maybe even deny our faith! You see, we expect God to always be there to deliver, guard, protect, and defend us from all trials and tribulations – and when He doesn’t, then we wonder and waver in our trust of him---just like the person that disappointed us when he didn’t come through for us as we thought.

The search of Wise Men gives us opportunity to examine God’s presence in our daily walk with him. When the Magi ask: **“Where is he”**, God’s Spirit leads us to discover the comfort and assurance that rests in the **“ONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS!”**

The Wise Men had reason for asking their question. On this first weekend of services in 2015, we have reason to ask the same question:

“WHERE IS HE?”

This commemoration of Epiphany then leads us to 3 specific places:

1. He is in His Son
2. He is in His Sacraments
3. He is in our service

1

EPIPHANY means “appearance, manifestation, a demonstration”. As the service notes on p. 1 of your bulletin indicate, January 6 is the 12th day of Christmas known as the **Gentiles Christmas**. It is an important festival when Jesus’ ministry comes into sharp focus as the Savior of all nations, a Savior whose love covers the world.

Something appeared very unusual to Wise Men who hailed from the area of Babylon where Israel was taken into captivity for 70 years. Who were these guys? They were highly educated astronomers who had degrees in the study of the stars. Their knowledge of history was well-documented too as they learned of the prophecies that Daniel left behind in the promise of a King to come via the city of Bethlehem. Some Jews stayed behind after King Cyrus permitted them to return to Jerusalem. No doubt that influence of a coming Messiah spread even to the political and social world through the passing of time. And these Magi picked up on that.

What they exactly saw and when (combined with what they knew) led them to make a fact-finding mission to Jerusalem figuring their question **WHERE IS HE** would be known. **WHERE IS THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM.**

WHERE IS GOD? In the child Jesus, the Wise Men have their answer. **He is in His Son!** Throughout history, God has been present among his people. He was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden communicating with them as they lived each day. God was on Mt. Sinai on a burning, smoking mountain, and then in a Tabernacle, and later in the temple. There God’s people could come to get in “touch” with God.

Then Isaiah foretold that a virgin would conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel (which means “God with us”). And now when **THE STAR THEY HAD SEEN IN THE EAST WENT AHEAD OF THEM UNTIL IT STOPPED OVER THE PLACE WHERE THE CHILD WAS...** now they saw God before them with their very own eyes!

When we ask **WHERE IS HE?**, Scripture clearly teaches that God reveals himself in the person of His Son, Jesus. John says: **IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US.** {Jn 1:1,14} God was in touch with the world before the world was in touch with him. He promised and sent Jesus to the cross as the perfect sacrifice for all the sins of doubting, mistrusting, and denying Him.

He takes away our guilt, our iniquities, and bears the entire load of punishment for us. When we search for God, always look at Calvary where God gets in ‘touch’ with us and we with Him. On the cross, Jesus becomes one with us and endures our condition so that he might be a **‘very present help in trouble.’** (Ps 46:1)

WHERE IS HE, we ask? **God is in His Son!**

2

Sometime in 2015, we may believe that although we know God is with us in Jesus, we still feel alienated from him because of our many troubles & sins. So we search for some tangible means through which we are assured of God’s love. When we ask **WHERE IS HE**, let’s find Jesus **IN HIS SACRAMENTS**.

What an overwhelming gift of grace is given us in His sacraments. The blessing we have is that through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, God unites himself with us to personally assure us of His mercy and love.

Another child [*Piper Stasney*] becomes a member of God’s kingdom in the late service. There in the water with the Word, God promises that he will never leave or forsake that child. There God declares that her sins and ours, which should separate us from him, are removed completely. We are his children by faith given us through the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, Jesus is present with us in His holy Supper in, with, and under the bread & wine offering us the personal, visible, tangible assurance that all our sins are washed away. Once again, God is in touch with us by Him reaching out to us in the Gospel to give us these tremendous blessings. We need that in life’s journey in 2015 – just as Wise Men needed to see the Christ-Child King in their journey.

WHERE IS HE, we ask? **He is in His Sacraments!**

3

Finally, like the Wise Men, **Christ is in our service**.

WHEN THEY SAW THE STAR, THEY WERE OVERJOYED. (literally, they rejoiced with great joy exceedingly) ON COMING TO THE HOUSE, THEY SAW THE CHILD AND THEY BOWED DOWN AND WORSHIPED HIM. THEN THEY OPENED THEIR TREASURES AND PRESENTED HIM WITH GIFTS...From their knees, they showed their humble thanks and praise to the One come for them and the world. They saw their Savior and now they showed their service. Christ was in their hearts and lives and **they loved him, because He first loved them.**

We don’t know how old Jesus was at this time, perhaps a toddler, certainly a young child living with Mary & Joseph. It didn’t matter. Their hearts were so full of love that they could not hold back offering their praise and thanks and gifts. Their treasures were His treasures and now they had opportunity to return a portion of them back to him.

In 2015, we are the Wise men & women who still seek the Savior for our personal strength and comfort. We find him in the Gospel here in our services. And we find him in our hearts where we want to serve Him. Paul once said in Ephesians: **You are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.** (Eph 2:19-21)

Welcome to the 2015 version of God’s household at St. Peter. Epiphany proclaims that God works through the church to reveal the mystery of the Gospel to all mankind. Thus through our loving service, [whatever that might be-*examples*] may God use us in 2015 **to show forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.** Bring your treasures, your gifts with grateful hearts in thanks to the Lord!

When you wonder **WHERE IS HE**, let’s always remember that **He is in His Son, He is in His sacraments, and He is in our service.** Those answers will keep you truly “WISE”. **AMEN**

{Congregational response: Apostles’ Creed}