

Epiphanies of Our Own

Intro. There is more than one kind of epiphany. Many of our epiphanies come after we have made some mistake and realize it, “Duuuh!” as the light goes off in our head. Epiphany is Greek meaning, “to reveal.” It means “a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization,” [Oxford English Dictionary]. The visitors were following a star to discover the revelation in Bethlehem.

I. Centuries ago, people believed very strongly in signs in nature. They experienced many things they didn't understand: earthquakes shaking them out of bed in the middle of the night; eclipses that made the day night; volcanos erupting that covered everything in hot lava and ash. When these things happened, they thought nature was angry at them. Some cosmic signs like comets and stars were more

awesome than frightening. To them a new star meant someone important had entered the world and would change it. Thus the magi, wise men or astronomers knew something had changed in their world. They researched the many cultures and religions as best they could, and began their journey. The new addition to the stars drew them across desert and river; through different countries and cultures. The chief priests and elders of Jerusalem quickly supplied them with the place: a little town of Bethlehem. It seems odd that after the interest by the foreign visitors it appears neither chief priest nor religious leader went to Bethlehem to check out the prophecy for which they had waited so long. In spite of the long tradition of such prophecies, they must not have really believed some backwater village would be the Messiah's birthplace. They assumed

his appearance would be to important people like *them* not simple shepherds. No light went off in their minds. No epiphany of any kind for them!

Concl. Some of our personal epiphanies come from our own experiences but also from wise women and men. Their gifts - while not gold, frankincense or myrrh - can be just as valuable. Insight and wisdom from lived experience are sometimes more valuable than gold or recent technologies. The wise men weren't disappointed that at the end of their journey all they found was a baby in a stable and not a prince in a palace. They *saw* the subject of their long search, *showed respect* to someone of importance and *returned home* to watch for how this child would change the world. And they like the shepherds were changed by their experience. On their return home, they told the story of a special child. The good news

of Jesus Christ already began to spread beyond just the chosen people; now the whole world was invited to share in it. We are blessed to have wise men and women in our families, our churches and among our friends. If we listen to and recognize the epiphanies the Lord sends us, we are likely to find our way in this world and in the next.

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