



## Matthew 2: 1 - 12

I often feel **Epiphany** seems like a Post Script to the Christmas Story.

**PS:** 'The Magi arrived and gave Jesus presents.' Not very exciting, compared to Christmas morning, is it?

Celebrating Epiphany, though, is a good way to look at the Christmas story afresh – an epiphany is **a revelation, a discovery.**

How is the Christ Child a revelation to me/to you?

What are we discovering when we come to the manger?

A few years ago, we visited Waddesdon Manor. The house and gardens were all dressed for the season. One of the rooms was dedicated to the story of Epiphany.

It enthralled me.

An array of children's shoes were left outside the door as in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, waiting to be filled with gifts from the wise men as they pass by.

There was a silhouette of camels on the fire place. Magi preparing to visit a king.

On the table stood 3 large pots filled with Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrh.

In Eastern Europe, Epiphany is a big event. Children dress up as kings and travel from door to door collecting for charity, remembering that the wise men brought gifts to the Christ child.

And as the song goes: On the twelfth day of Christmas, there are 12 drummers drumming, they must be celebrating the arrival of the Wise Men in Bethlehem!

There is a lot of myth and tradition surrounding the Magi....we don't know who they were....some say Persian priests, some say astrologers, some say Kings.

We don't know, how many of them there were, but we can speculate from the number of gifts they bring and we don't yet know the full significance of the gifts.

Whether they were kings, astrologers or otherwise: and whether there were three, seven, or twelve of them. The Magi were wise men, and they show us the way of true wisdom, because they lead us to Jesus. Jesus who draws men and women to himself

from every period of history, every family of humanity, and every segment of society.

In Matthews account of the story, he wants to be clear from the start that, although, Jesus is the King of the Jewish people, his Kingdom is not limited to just them. The Magi represent the Gentile world in all its diversity, and so the good news is that Jesus is revealed as coming for everyone, there are no outsiders to Him.

However, Epiphany celebrates so much more than the Wise Men. We also see in this season, the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God at his baptism and discover the power of Jesus in his first miracle, when he, changed water into wine at Cana.

These three things: The Wise Men, the Baptism and Cana, symbolise the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and this is the cause for great celebration. We need to put the excitement back into Epiphany and rekindle this sense of expectation. (Next Year)

Only a handful of Magi followed the star to Bethlehem and worshipped the life that changed everything.

The wedding at Cana was crowded, but only a few were aware that Jesus had worked a miracle in their midst. Most weren't paying attention. They missed an event that people have talked about for two thousand years.

Epiphany reminds us that God appears miraculously to us in places, and people, and in ways that we don't expect.

If we keep remembering that God is a God of the unexpected, we are more likely to follow the star that is calling to us.

I've been thinking how **do we** follow a star??

Firstly, it needs to capture our attention, secondly, we need to question the meaning of it. Thirdly we need to be seekers.

The Magi saw the light shining in the darkness, it caught their attention, they questioned its meaning, many believed, at that time, that a remarkable event in the skies, like a new star, must mean, a remarkable event on earth.

They also, knew that the Jewish tradition identifies a star with a Messiah and this could have sparked enough curiosity and sent them off seeking in the star's direction in order to find the infant King. Eventually they find what they are looking for and present their gifts.

They wanted to search for meaning by seeking the One who made life meaningful. And... we can do the same.

The story, though, describes two other sets of people:

Herod was a ruthless power hungry, self-absorbed King. All his drive and seeking in his life was motivated by self-preservation and his anxiety about a potential rival. I wonder how many of today's world leaders follow that pattern.

The Chief Priests and Teachers are another group, seeking meaning. They were trained and educated in the details of scripture. All their seeking for meaning in life was motivated by their quest for knowledge and they missed out on the Love.

Both groups stand in conflict with the Magi, and so among the Good News that Christ comes for ALL, there is another message the Magi bring us to **seek out what is most important.**

Whoever they are: kings, magi, wise men they symbolise the importance of seeking out the important! they had an understanding of the greatness, the mercy, the steadfast loving-kindness of our God. May we come with them to worship him, and bring our gifts.

May we freely give the gold of our heart,  
the myrrh of our grief, and as incense rises  
the frankincense of our dreams.

We are all on a spiritual journey, Matthew emphasises in his message today that if we persist like the Magi, we will find Him, we will experience an epiphany too.

May the eyes of our hearts be opened to see the beauty of our Lord;  
may the chambers of our hearts be expanded to make room for  
more of His grace. May we be generous to those we meet on our  
journey.

From the Holy Island of Iona

Wise God Shining in darkness  
Seen by those who love you  
Found by those who seek you  
We are here to learn from you

Kings and nations  
Weak and powerful  
All are coming to meet with God

Sons and daughters  
Rich and needy  
All are coming to meet with God

Strong and mighty  
Weak and gentle  
All are coming to meet with God

- ✚ Give thanks for a moment of wonder
- ✚ Offer our gift this year
- ✚ Consider some aspect of darkness and pray for light
- ✚ Name a companion on the journey and give thanks for their support

Surely our prayer, for Epiphany is that we too will be led on a pilgrimage to seek more of Our Lord.

We may be asked to return home by another road.

We may find Him where we least expect.

Starshine, Moonshine, Sunshine,  
Let us walk with God

Mountains, Main roads, Side-tracks,  
Let us walk with God

Questions, Answers, Mysteries,  
Let us walk with God

Backwards, Onwards, Homewards,  
Let us walk with God

Alpha/ LLF

The change of direction may mean life will never be the same again,  
but... God our Father will prepare our journey and Jesus will guide  
our footsteps.

Mountains, Main roads, Side-tracks,  
We will walk with God

Questions, Answers, Mysteries,  
We will walk with God

Backwards, Onwards, Homewards,  
We will walk with God. Amen