

Eastern Mission

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

January 2023

Dear Friends,

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, ² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. ³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, ⁶ And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. ⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. ¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”
Matthew 2:1-12

The visitation of the wise men, recorded here in the Gospel of Matthew has been historically celebrated in the Christian Church on January 6th as the Festival of the Epiphany. It marks the first time that Jesus Christ was made known to the Gentiles. What a marvelous journey that must have been for the wise men! God miraculously led them to the Christ-Child with the help of a star that moved before them in the sky. The season of Epiphany is marked by the theme of manifestation. In Christ, God makes Himself known not just to the nation of Israel, but to all people. While God may not lead us by a star today, He does lead us by the miracle of His Word. God’s Word is truly miraculous in that it has the power to work repentance and to kindle faith in the hearts of men. Just as the star did for the wise men, the Word of God leads us to Christ. For in Christ alone can we find forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Because of His great love for us, God ***“...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins...”***
Colossians 1:13-14

As we begin the New Year, may God grant us grace to hearken unto His Word, so that we might hear, believe and live.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. ² For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. ³ And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”
Isaiah 60:1-3

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Chuck Bylkas