

Matthew 2:1-12 Jan 5th, 2020

What's in your Faith Wallet?

I often wish that the bible had an appendage called the back story. In today's Gospel I would like to know the following. Were the three Wise Men friends before they saw the star? Were they colleagues from various areas that used super snail mail to talk about the siting of the unique star they had seen in common? Did they travel well together? Or did they have their moments where they needed their space? How many days did it take them to reach Bethlehem? Were they wise enough to stop and ask the court of Herod directions to find the Messiah? How much faith did

they have to have to follow a star...and an idea based on prophets...and being astrologers not astronomers what kind of respect did they have amongst their peers? And from Jennifer's sermon a few weeks ago were their dreams of not to trust Herod given to them by the Angel Hark and/or the Angel Herald?

Then how were their lives transformed after the experience? What was the conversation like on their way home? What causes great leaders to have as much paranoia as Herod did? And think how many leaders have had such paranoia since the time of Herod and how many leaders today still have this much paranoia?

What happened to these expensive gifts after the Magi had left? And show me by a raise of hands how many of you have the three Kings take a journey around your home so they arrive on Epiphany to your Nativity scenes? And do any of you have them stop off at Herods for a period of time?

On some level wouldn't our faith be so much easier to follow if we had the appendage of the back story?

As we journey through life and all the Christmas season we have been through how has the back

story of each season impacted us to become the people we are today? I often tell people I like to be young at heart but enjoy the wisdom of my years. So, I hope that my faith in Jesus and how he impacts my life has matured along with me. Assuming I have emotionally matured over the years. If I had been a shepherd in the fields at Jesus's birth the curiosity of being visited by an Angel and the foretelling of who was born in the stable may have been cause for me to go check it out. Maybe wondering if I had taken one to many hits on the wine Bota.

But here are three scholarly men who with blind faith intentionally set out on the journey to meet whom they believed was the new King of the Jews.

And more to the point the King of all Nations. We assume they are well organized as they bring gifts for most likely one of the first baby showers. They are confident on their mission. They have the faith of their studies that all signs have come to pass to lead them on this journey. God, not taking your name in vain, but why is my faith journey not as well intentioned as these three Magi?

The Episcopal church faith journey is well intentioned through the liturgical calendar. Varying by whether it is year A, B or C. And the liturgical calendar is a relatively new invention of the church. And actually, today we are jumping the Epiphany gun a day early. So, if your wise men are not to the creche today you would be correct.

As for my personal faith journey, as per the astrologer wise men I am an Aquarian. Born to a farm couple who were both Roman Catholics. So, I understood what a stable was like from my upbringing. My parents were religious but not necessarily fanatical in their beliefs. Went to a Catholic school which on some level was a boot camp to try and get young people into a vocational life as either a priest or a nun based on your assumed gender. So, on some level I am a Christian by default. My time with New Song has been my longest affiliation with a continuous church community since that of my youth. And I have successfully avoided being an altar boy or wearing any kind of religious collar accepted for once when I

was ordained online to do a friend's wedding and a rented outfit for my first communion.

The upside of my faith journey is that it has been blessed by a wide variety of friends and mentors of varied religious beliefs and faiths. Most of the greatest mentors in my life have been Jewish. One of the advantages of the family I was born into was that it had some issues when a member or two left the catholic faith. But by the time I came around or was old enough to know about it most of that judgement had passed. And at an Easter dinner long ago my mother explained to John Harper that she had come to the point that it didn't matter whether her children were Catholic or not she was glad that we had a spiritual side or a system of faith

that we believed in. That was her response to the many Christmas seasons of her own life.

I have lived enough Christmas seasons in my life to have welcomed new members into our tribes and to have to say farewell to others. But being raised by strong stoic midwestern women of deep faith in the birth of a baby in a stable who later proclaimed our reward of eternal life in heaven. I have learned the art of how I grieve loss, while at the same time trying to keep moving forward. And I was blessed by an extended family that did the best they knew how to be supportive of each other. Never perfect but they did their best. Not on like the New Song family that I have hung with for so long. And in

reflection my journey with New Song has been more by accident than by design.

But what is my epiphany this day before the epiphany about this Gospel reading. What would my personal back story appendage be?

First. Paranoid rulers have been around forever. They may do beyond evil things and we must listen to our angels and guides on how best not to fall into their traps and how best to defy their tyranny. But they are rulers of just this the earthly kingdom. My faith journey tells me I must to my best to stop them, but my ultimate King is the one born in the

manager all those years ago. Sometimes a difficult task to remember in our daily lives.

Second. The faith journey for each of us is as unique and as priceless as the gifts that the three kings bring to the Holy Family and as unique as the different version of the epiphany are amongst the various Gospels of the bible. The different Gospel lessons used depending on the liturgical calendar. Some of you may have been blessed by my perception that your callings were made known to you straight way. Like a star followed with such intent by the scholars in the Gospel today. And so, I may be envious of my perception of the easiness of your paths. I am sure a lot of the learned theologians here at New Song will tell me the

journey was much different then that. And though I may be Christian by default and my Christmas seasons of faith more by accident then design I have never felt that my faith path has ever been wrong. On occasion I have had to follow it kicking and screaming but with the wisdom of my years I know that Jesus has always had my back and guided me in the right direction. I cannot explain the why or how, but I just know. I guess that is what faith is.

But here we are at the end of the Christmas Season once again. When asked by friends how my Holidays were I have replied just the right amount. The right amount of time with family and friends, the right amount of reflection, the right amount of

worship and possibly some new wisdom for the years ahead.

But there is one last item to my personal back story appendage . One more question that we need to answer? How do we learn to discuss the transformative power of the love that has been bestowed upon us from the child Jesus born so long ago? How to we learn to express or faith that is either by accident or created with such intention by our creator God? How to we face the challenges that are ramping up already this New Year from leaders of this planet that are so paranoid about their positions of power?

Unfortunately, there is no way to write a back story of the future.

We must now more than ever rely on the priceless gifts that each of us bring to the table in our wonderful and varied faith journeys. Whether they were by divine intent or divine accident. To help bring Christ's love back into our Earthly home.

Whether in ways of defying tyrants, finding equality for all human rights, finding ways to return the ecosystems of this planet back into balance. Each of us have a different gift for each of the different issue we the human race face at this moment in time. Whether our work is individually or through community such as New Song. What is the wisdom of all of your Christmas seasons that you can share?

So as we enter the new light the new dawn of the Epiphany Season what is in your faith wallet that you can use to make the changes we need, for the work is not yet complete.

And all of God's Children say, Amen.