

Epiphany 7th Jan 2018 Wise men or **Herod...** whose story?  
Matt 2:1-12 Isaiah 60:1-6 Eph 3:1-12

Do sit down (Pray in a minute)

Happy New Year !

How are your New Year Resolutions? Keeping them?

How are you feeling about this coming year?

I am excited! Looking forward. Hopeful Expectant

Pray that after a few minutes looking at this mornings readings that you too will be feeling more excited and more hope full

## PRAY

This great and familiar story this morning

Kings? **Wise men?** Magi?

Christmas Eve Nativity we had a shortage of 'them' Girls didn't want to be kings or wise 'men'!

Stick with wise men this morning as in the reading... ladies - don't feel excluded!

Think about their **attitude**, their demeanour

Look at the passage

They came...they came looking for the child

They were asking... asking of his whereabouts

They came with their treasure chests

They were expectant of finding a child, the promised king of the Jews

They weren't Jews themselves but came looking for the one who had been promised long before in the ancient scriptures (at least 400 years had passed between the last prophecies and Jesus' birth)

The promised ruler who, as the scribes and pharisees told Herod, would be a shepherd for Israel (Micah 5:2-4)

When the star stopped and they finally got to their destination they were what?

Exhausted? Tired? Relieved? No!

We read in vs 10 that they were overwhelmed with JOY

These men had journeyed from far off lands, for some time, being guided by a star, searching for a new born child

And when they found him they were overjoyed. They knelt down before him and paid him homage.

These wise men entered the place where Jesus was lying, **they entered in to His story**

The Greek word that Matthew uses here for paying homage is the same as to worship, to show reverence

I looked it up on Wikipedia too...

Pay homage...

the formal public acknowledgment, in medieval times, by which a tenant declared himself to be the man of his lord, pledging service and aid to him

the tenant would promise to remain faithful to the lord in reverence and submission

The wise men came, asking for, searching for the one that they had heard about and, overwhelmed with joy, they entered in to His story kneeling before the baby in an act of submission and reverence.

And then, they offered Him, precious and significant gifts.

All speaks of an attitude of humility which comes from the heart as they left their story behind and entered in to that of this promised child.

In contrast lets look briefly at Herod

He heard... because others came to him and spoke of the baby

He was frightened... because his authority and position were threatened

He did things in secret

He sent the wise men off to do the work of finding the baby, the going and searching, and then he would go and see the baby

A very different attitude to the wise men. No hope or expectation or excitement

He did NOT enter in to the story of Jesus. He never did go and see Him face to face

All Herod was concerned about was his own story and wanting that to work out as he wanted!

God has always had a great story that, over the centuries, he has invited us into

A story of love and hope and life in all its abundance

In our Isaiah reading God promises the people of Israel that once again Zion will arise and shine

It had been in ruins because as a people they had chosen to stick to their own story and rebelled against God

But now, after they had turned back to God, He was promising them something new and good

Not just for them but something that would be so attractive to other nations

'Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn' Is 60:3

God was telling them, through Isaiah, that as they re-entered into God's story, as they believed and surrendered to Him once more, their love for God and their holy lives would be attractive to others and draw others in to God's story of the love and light of Christ.

The promise to those who join God in His story, who become partakers in His story is awesome!

As Paul writes in Ephesians, all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, could become fellow-heirs with Christ, members of God's body, sharers in His promise

God came to earth as that vulnerable baby.

But as we were reminded, those of us here at our Midnight Service, He did not stay vulnerable.

He came to enable us to join Him in His story

A story of love of life of hope of overwhelming joy of transformation.

As individuals we need to choose whether we are going to surrender and choose to walk in to God story with Him

And as a church we also have that choice to make

Do we want to do things our way, or do we want to listen to God and watch for Him and join Him in His story for St Georges and Owlsmoor and College Town?

There is the opportunity for us to journey with other churches across the Diocese in finding out how to do this better. How to get better at noticing Him and hearing Him for ourselves and for the church and so ultimately for God and His Kingdom

On Thursday evening please come along and hear about **Partnership for Missional Churches**.  
Richard Lamey and one or 2 people from St Pauls church in Wokingham are coming to tell us  
about how they have been journeying with PMC for the last 2+ years

I bet those wise men were never the same again. Their lives must have been changed  
But I bet they were glad that they persevered on that journey and came to the place where the star  
rested and where they were able to worship the King of Kings  
His story, if we step in to it requires reverence and submission and humility  
It means giving up our own story, our own plan, our own sense of status  
And stepping in to all that God's story holds for us  
A story that is full of light and life

So! This new year of 2018... are we going to be like Herod and stick to our plan and our story  
Or are we going to be like the wise men and enter in to God's story and all that it holds?  
**Response...** come and kneel before Him, in surrender, in hope and expectation overwhelmed  
by joy?