

# “A Magi-cal, Star Lit Journey”

Matthew 2:1-12

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“Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight;  
I wish I may, I wish I might, I wish upon the first star tonight.”

It must have been quite the site to behold. The Magi. The Star. Their entourage. Their journey from afar. What a wonder for all. Magi-cal even perhaps?

Not your everyday occurrence to say the least. And it may make you ponder.

As a congregation we just completed “Walking and Singing the Journey to Bethlehem” aka the Advent season. This journey culminated on Christmas Eve at the manger with the birth of the Christ child. God Incarnate. A prophesy “foretold of old”. Mary, Joseph, angels, animals, shepherds, and a Star.

God assembled a most magnificent ensemble for this particular journey.

Today we hear the story of yet another biblical journey. The journey of the Magi, or as Merilee read from the Good News Translation, “men who studied the stars” or “visitors from the East”. In other translations [KJV and RSV] they are referred to as “the wisemen”. The Living Bible calls them “astrologers”. It is in the NIV translation that the term “Magi” is used. And this story itself is told only in the gospel of Matthew. What country were these fine folks from? Were they royalty [as in kings that we sing about]? Were they exiles from arar? How long did their journey take? What star lit and guided their journey? Perhaps more relevant to today’s gathering is the simple question, “Who were the Magi”? That question remains a point of debate among biblical scholars, theologians, clergy, and lay persons. Ponder that for a few moments.

Here we are, gathered all together in a New Year. Before we travel too far into the first message of this new year, a few wayward thoughts and questions come to mind. How soon will we get used to the sound of 2022? How long will it be before we adjust to writing 2022 on our cards, checks, letters, [and for my co-workers-on their time sheets]? Did anyone take a moment to pre-write 2022 on a few of your personal checks? Have you sat down and written out resolutions for the new year and hung new calendars? More importantly-are you sad to have 2021 now part of history? Covid issues, personal losses, tragedies, and other issues. 2021 was a unique journey through life for all of us. 2021, like 2020, was disruptive, divisive, and unfortunately, filled with fear and mistrust. It was challenging to say the least. 2021- to be fair-we were able to return, within limits, to a more “regular” life. Schools opened to in-person learning, school activities and

events. School sports resumed. A chance to return to behind the microphone. Special events-weddings, births, special birthday celebrations. Modified bazaar. Modified worship. Online, Zoom, Outdoor, Indoor. Spaced. With masks. We were able to travel. To take postponed journeys. Near and far. See family. Reconnect. Pastor Rebecca and Clarke are on a journey today. One previously delayed by construction and covid concerns. A journey to see friends. To greet the New Year.

Our faith, and our faith journey, continued and continues to keep us centered, comforted, focused, worshipping, and walking towards that which God guided us to do. Will 2022 be more of the same? More of the “new normal”? I detest that term. Perhaps “current reality” fits better. At least I prefer that term. More to ponder.

The Bible is filled with numerous stories of those on a journey. Journey-defined as “an act of traveling from one place to another, usually taking a long time”. There are sub-definitions as well including “a passage or progress from one stage to another”. Let’s focus on those for the purpose of this message.

God dispatched Moses, the Hebrews, Noah, prophets, angels, and many others on one journey or another. The Magi join the list.

Who were the Magi? There are differing views and opinions. While reading through the commentaries on today’s scripture, as well as Wikipedia, handouts, and other sources; there is no definitive answer provided. There are also differing opinions and translations as to the age of Jesus, the Christ child, when the Magi visited. Anywhere from a baby to a young child, allowing for a span of up to and over a year of journey time.

Regardless, what a journey it must have been. Guided by God's Star. We are not talking calling for Lyftup or Uber services. No. Camels, donkeys, other beasts of burden. This was not a fast-moving group but a long, and dusty trip over desert land. The size of the entourage is uncertain as well. They left "wherever" with "whomever", searching for the one "born King of the Jews". The Messiah. As prophesied and foretold of old.

The Magi, wisemen, visitors from the East, astrologers, etc. apparently had the standing to seek a meeting with King Herod and be granted one. And Herod was not the sort to meet with just anyone. He was large and in charge. Placed in power by the Romans and left to his own accord since he performed his role well. Not that they trusted him. He was an able administrator and did what he was told. Most lived in fear of Herod and his rule. He had members of his own family murdered and other

rivals to his throne. And now he learned of a child born to be “King of the Jews”. These travelers were searching for this child and have come to worship him. A rival to his throne. This could not be. Let me know, so I can also worship Him. Herod was not to be trusted.

The Magi depart from Herod. Their journey continues. The star they had followed rose ahead of them and stops over the place where the child was. They saw Mary and the child, [no mention of Joseph in this scripture]. They knelt down and worshiped Him, and brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gifts fit for a king. They honor and pay homage. No details are provided as to how long the Magi were in Christ’s presence. They depart.

Traveling back to their own country by another route. As instructed in a dream. Do not go back to Herod. The Magi are barely mentioned further. Seems quite a long way to journey from

afar and not be cast in a larger role in the long run. But was it?

The Magi came to worship the Christ-child. God incarnate. As led and guided by God's will. By God's star. Perhaps an angle declaring by light God's direction. To find God's son and to honor and worship Him. To be in His very presence. Their Magi-cal journey lit by a star.

Stars, Longfellow said, "the forget me nots of the angels"

We ourselves come to worship God. To worship Jesus, God's son. To be guided and filled with the light and love of Christ. Another journey of faith. A journey both intensely personal and corporately shared with fellow believers. "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!" These words should sound familiar to all of us.



To start our worship service, we light the altar candles. This represents the light of God and Christ being brought into this sanctuary. God's house. During this season we light the advent candles to represent Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. We light the Christ candle to represent the fulfillment of God's promises and presence with us and within us. Today, and in past services, we have lit candles in honor of loved ones, those in need, those on heart and mind, those who have passed to another life.

Who were the Magi? Those who came from afar to worship and honor the Christ child. The one born to be "King of the Jews".

We ourselves may not have a faith journey lit by a star in the sky, but our journey of faith continues. Guided by God's love, presence, and continued promises. Amen.

References: Bible Gateway, Wikipedia, Dictionaries, Commentaries including Enduring Word, Teach Sunday School.com, Sermon Writer; Daily Guidepost, Our Daily Bread, Farmer's Almanac, Facebook, and other sources.