

+ A Star + The Magi + The Gifts + The Flight for Life +



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+ The People of Mount Zion-Finksburg +

The Fourth Sunday after The Epiphany + January 29, 2023+ Worship 9:55 a.m.

Leslie Gabler, Director of Music

Ushers Barbara & Bob Hayes +

TODAY'S KEY PASSAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

(1) "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews. For we have observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.'" Matthew 2.12

(2) "Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him bring me word so that I may go and pay him homage.'" Matthew 2.7

(3) "On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then opening their treasure chests they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. Matthew 2.13.

(4) "Now after they had left an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'" Matthew 2.13

(5) "When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men." Matthew 2.16

Musical Prelude Let us prepare for the worship of God by listening. + God is still speaking +
Congregation Singing Verses One & Four #246 "Joy to the World"

Call to Worship (Unison)

As we gather as the people of God
Let us worship together
When Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph,
God was there.
When Jesus was presented at the temple,
God was there.
When Simeon held Jesus in his arms,
God was there.
When Anna recognized Jesus in the temple,
God was there.
This very day as we gather for worship
God is here.
Even in the future that we cannot see,

**God will be there.
Let us worship God!**

Opening Hymn “The First Noel” UM Hymnal #245

Introduction to the hymn+ “The First Noel” (UM Hymnal #245)

We have three (3) videos to show you (first time)

Verse One “traditional” Christmas Carol (Shepherds)

Verses Two through Five – Change – An event that happened over 1 ½ years later

Lighting of the Christ Candle

As we sing this beautiful hymn we light the Christ Candle as a present reminder that Jesus is the light of the world, and the darkness of the world will never put it out!”

Opening Prayer

In the light and even in the darkness God is with us.

**For you are with us, O God,
In the light. and even in the darkness**

For the physical darkness is not our enemy but our friend

**In the darkness of the womb,
we have all been nurtured and protected.**

**In the darkness of the womb
the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.**

**It is only in the darkness
that we can see the splendor of the universe –
blankets of stars, the solitary glowing of the planets.**

**It was the darkness that allowed the Magi to find the star
that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.**

**In the darkness of the night,
desert people find relief from the cruel relentless heat of the sun.**

**In the blessed desert darkness
Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus
to safety in Egypt.**

**In the darkness of sleep,
we are soothed and restored, healed and renewed.**

**Sometimes in the solitude of the darkness
our fears and concerns, our hopes and visions
rise to the surface.**

**We come face to face with ourselves
and with the road that lies ahead of us.**

And in that same darkness
we find companionship for the journey.

In that same darkness
we sometimes allow ourselves to wonder and worry
whether the human race is going to survive.

And then, in the darkness
we know that you are with us, O God,
yet still we await your coming again and again.

For you are with us, O God,
in darkness and in light.

We Welcome our Children

Even if we do not have children in congregational worship we remember all God's children.

“This Is Where Children Belong” #2233 “The Faith We Sing” songbook

“This, this is where children belong, welcomed as part of the worshipping throng. Water,
God's Word, bread and cup, prayer and song. This is where children belong.”

Informal Moments + Reception of our Tithes & Offerings

Offering Response (Hymnal #94) “Praise God” with Alleluias

Video Hymn “We Three Kings”

Anthem The Faithful Few “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship” Come, now is the time to worship,
Come, now is the time to give your heart, Come, just as you are to worship, Come, just as you
are, before your God, Come! One day every tongue will confess you are God, One day every
knee will bow, Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose you now.”

Message The Biblical Message + Chapter Two The Gospel According to Matthew

Morning Prayer and our Lord's Prayer (Unison)

Almighty God,
as we gather in this place to worship you,
we know that all across the globe,
men and women, children and youth, gather as well to be your church
in all times, in all places, in all languages, in all cultures.

Pour out your Spirit upon your church universal,
that all who gather in your name
and all who praise you
may feel your presence,
know your will,
and have the courage to do what you are calling us to do.
We pray in the name of the One God. Amen.

(Let us pray the “Our Father” together)

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Video “We Three Kings” ((Kirk Franklin)

Message How does the Biblical lesson of the morning speak to me and you this week?

Closing Hymn (a) “There’s Something About That Name” UM Hymnal #171
(b) “His Name is Wonderful” UM Hymnal #174

Closing Words – Sending Forth (In Unison)

This morning, we have sung, we have prayed,
we have worshiped together.
Now we go back out into the world.
We came together to build relationships, relationships with each other,
and our relationship with Jesus.
We go out as people who are strengthened by our connections
Ready to love and to serve.
Ready to carry God's love to the world.
As you journey through the ups and the downs of the coming week,
let us remember that God, who has invited us into relationship, is always with us.
Go with God, as the people of God.
So be it! Amen

We Sing Together “God be with you till we meet again, by his counsels guide uphold
you. With his sheep securely fold you. God be with you till we meet again.
Till we meet, till we meet. Till we meet at Jesus’ feet, till we meet, till we meet. God
be with you till we meet again.”

Telling the Story of the Magi, Joseph, Mary, Jesus and Herod

1. Before we start it is important to note that Matthew chapter 2 took place over 1 ½ years after the nativity account in Luke & Matthew.
2. Thus these two events (a) the birth of Jesus (b) The Magi, are actually separate events. They did not happen at the same moment.
3. Read Matthew 2.1-2 (two verses) in the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews. For we have observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.’
4. Remember at this time Mary, Joseph, the newborn baby Jesus were in Bethlehem having come from the north (Galilee) town of Nazareth.
5. Since Holy Scriptures says there was no room in the local inn the baby was born in a manger, probably in a “cave” on the outskirts of the town. Why a cave and not a stable?
6. Now we shift to the East of Jerusalem, the ? courts of Parthia or Armenia. The Biblical account of the Magi. These men were astrologers, or star gazers – “wise” men (meaning well educated), (Greek “magoi” or Magi) They were not “kings” although the people of Bethlehem may have thought they looked like that.
7. The astrologers saw something one evening that they had never seen before. We often call it the “star of Bethlehem.” Scientists believe it was some form of nova or bright moving object. Regardless of what it might have been it created a great curiosity for the “star gazers.”
8. Jews who lived in that same location as the Magi (having been forcibly moved there after losing a war) had a feeling (expectation) that this might be a sign that a long awaited “Messiah” have been born in their own country, Israel (Jerusalem)
9. Knowing beliefs of the Jews and with the feeling that something excited may have happened the Magi decided to make the trip “west” to see this thing that taken place. They also had a tradition in that day to take “special gifts”
10. When the Magi arrived (there was probably a whole caravan of them to give them safety going across the desert they made a “proper” visit to see the local king, Herod of Israel.
11. Herod, appointed by Rome, was an interesting person. He did some good things for the people like building an aqueduct to get water into the city at a time of great drought. At the same time he was paranoid, he heard “footsteps” behind him. of people including his own family who were out to get him. He killed a number of his own family and others in power. In Rome it was said it was safer to be Herod’s dog than a member of his own family. Herod was frightened and all Jerusalem with him.
12. He was “deadly” concerned that a new king might take his place he asked the Magi when they saw the object in the sky, (by this time about 1 ½ years had gone by. The baby Jesus was now a toddler), how long they had been traveling and where the

child was to be born. He lied and said that once he found out he himself would go and worship and pay homage to him.

13. Although they were not Jews the Magi knew Jewish prophecy which said in the prophet Micah (5.2ff) “But you O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you will come forth for me one who is to rule Israel.”
11. Biblical tradition has it that the Magi left Jerusalem, headed toward Bethlehem which is only about 5/6 miles by following “the star.” When they arrived they found that the Holy Family was living in a “house.”
12. On entering the “house” they saw Mary and the child, they knelt down and paid him homage, opened their treasure chests and gave him three gifts: Gold (for a king), Frankincense (for a high priest) and Myrrh (an ointment). They were warned in a dream not to return back to Herod they went home another way.
13. Matthew 2.16 “When King Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.’
14. Matthew 2.13 “Now after the Magi had left Bethlehem an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you for Herod is about to search for the child and destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod (37-4 BCE)
15. When Herod died an angel appeared to Joseph saying it is “ok to go home.” But there was another problem. Archelaus, the son of Herod was now in charge of the Judah area and he was worse than his father.
16. Joseph is warned in a dream to stay away from the Jerusalem area and he travels north into the Galilee area and makes his home in the city of Nazareth.