

Epiphany 2022
Matthew 2:1-12, Ephesians 3:1-12
A Brief Meditation by Rev. J. Michael Cobb
Epiphany Sunday
Woodbury UMC
January 2, 2022

Epiphany Sunday:

The first and most famous baby shower of all time!

With Epiphany, we have started a new calendar year, and in the church we start a new season, Epiphany, which lasts through Ash Wednesday — another two months.

And of course, this is the day we remember the story of the magi, leaving their home on a pilgrimage to seek the Christ Child.

Being warned in a dream, the Magi choose a different direction to journey back home. This leads them away from Herod's deception, manipulation, and intended harm. The Magi make a subversive choice to disobey Herod so intentionally. They listen to God speaking to them through their dreams, and they make their choice.

I thought about this, and it occurs to me that since these are people who already met with Herod, had good conversations with Herod, then they could probably go back to Herod, and nothing bad would have happened to them. He may have rewarded them, and it probably would have been part of a good political alliance. But they were warned by God in a dream, and by following God's will, it didn't particularly benefit them, but it made a big difference for many people, ultimately including all of us who follow Jesus.

This is a story of journeying, and of decisions, and of consequences. As our own journeys continue, we remember we must sometimes be ready to change our plans, to make bold choices to choose a different way, even when that means taking risks. I think that is a strong message for us today, that we choose to take actions that help prevent harm to others, even if not in our own immediate self interest, this is something we should do because it is the right thing to do.

I want to share with you a prayer from the great theologian Howard Thurman, titled A Prayer For The New Year:

God,

Grant that I may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart. There will be much to test me and make weak my strength before the year ends.

In my confusion I shall often say the word that is not true and do the thing of which I am ashamed. There will be errors in the mind and great inaccuracies of judgment.

*In seeking the light,
I shall again and again find myself
walking in the darkness.*

*I shall mistake my light for Your light
and I shall drink from the responsibility of the choice I make...*

Though my days be marked with failures, stumblings, fallings, let my spirit be free so that You may take it and redeem my moments in all the ways my needs reveal.

Give me the quiet assurance of Your Love and Presence. Grant that I may pass through the coming year with a faithful heart. Amen.

From *Meditations Of The Heart* by Howard Thurman

That is the message I have for you today. As we are forced to change our own plans, and make decisions with some boldness, by doing something like this with the possibility of helping people, that possibility is reason enough to do so, and I hope this will encourage you to take bold action in your own life.