

Epiphany

January 9, 2022

Gifts



Rev. Emma Chattin, Preaching

First Reading ~ *Matthew 2:1-12*

After the birth of Jesus, which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod, Magi –astrologers– from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, since from you will come a leader who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star’s appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

After their audience with Herod, they set out. The star they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasures, 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 way.

Second Reading ~from “So Many Gifts”, By Hafiz of Shiraz (c. 1320-1389)

There are so many gifts
Still unopened from your birthday,
There are so many hand-crafted presents
That have been sent to you by God.

The Beloved does not mind repeating,
“Everything I have is also yours.”
....
Indeed, a lover's pain is this sleeping,

This sleeping,
When God just rolled over and gave you
Such a big good-morning kiss!

There are so many gifts, my dear,
Still unopened from your birthday.

O, there are so many hand-crafted presents
That have been sent to your life
From God.

Third Reading ~from Tony Campolo

A ritual takes what happened a long time ago and drags it into the present so you can experience it here and now. Rituals keep us from forgetting what must not be forgotten and keep us rooted in a past from which we must not be disconnected.