



December 21, 2020

To Baptists around the world during this Christmas Season,

*"We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." – Matthew 2:2*

The Magi moved through mountainous terrain and desert landscapes, covering hundreds of miles over dozens of days. It was a journey marked by unexpected turns, an unclear destination, and collision with an unsettled government.

In the star that guided the Magi, we are reminded there are seasons of uncertainty. There are seasons when the journey seems perilous and calls us to an uncertain destination, when the comforts of familiarity must be left behind, when planned objectives must be set to the side, and all that is before us is to find Christ and join him. For in the birth of newness, Christ inaugurates the Kingdom of God. To a world weary from the unexpected journey of this year, if all you can do is to take one more step – take that step holding to the hope that God is present and Christ welcomes you. In the Magi, Christ asks, will we welcome all people from all countries of all ethnicities?

In the travels of the Magi, we are reminded there are many who are traveling through the night and navigating contexts of conflict. The Magi remind us to listen to those on the margins. The government did not anticipate the Magi, the religious leaders did not anticipate the Magi, and the home of Mary and Joseph did not anticipate the Magi. They came from the margins. There are many who feel as if they are on the margins. Today there are 79 million displaced people, more people forcibly displaced from their homes than at any other point in the last 70 years. As these sisters and brothers are on their unexpected journey, we are called to stand with them. Mary and Joseph ask if we will follow their example – will we choose to have a home hospitable enough to welcome unexpected guests on a journey from the margins, receiving the gifts for Christ they carry and that we need?

In the actions of the Magi, we are reminded to be formed by worship. The Bible reads, "We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). "On coming to the house ... they bowed down and worshiped him" (Matthew 2:11). The uncertainty of the destination did not override their focus to worship. The demands of the day did not detract from their kneeling in worship. They did not allow the call of the palace or the promise of access and power to coopt their priority to worship. They worshiped Jesus. Finding him as an infant, Jesus did not lay his healing hand on them. Jesus did not change the contours of their life by driving out the demons that tormented them. Jesus did not share words of insight to them. In this instance, as an infant, Jesus could not offer any blessing to them except the blessing of his presence. It was enough to be with Jesus. The Magi ask if we too – more than practical blessing, profession, or power – will be formed by worship that says it is enough to be with Jesus?

On behalf of the Baptist World Alliance and Baptists in 126 countries and territories, this Christmas may we journey together and find the joy of Jesus.

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