



SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

306 N. Division Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 • (734) 663-0518 • www.standrewsaa.org

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Second Sunday after Christmas

Dear friends:

The lectionary offers options on this second Sunday after Christmas. In the choice made for today we will hear the familiar story of the three Wise Men who travelled from their distant homes to pay homage to the Christ-child in Bethlehem. But there is more to this story that, often is but, should not be overlooked. What is not always told is the dark side of the Christmas story, what happened after the Wise Men headed home, of King Herod's plot to kill the new-born "king of the Jews" that the prophets sought and whom the Wise Men worshipped. So terrified was Herod of this baby that he had all the infant boys of Bethlehem slaughtered, just to get rid of one child whom he saw as a challenge to his power. Herod wasn't the first ruler to kill children and he certainly wasn't the last. Like the elderly, children, because they can't fight back, are among the first to suffer when someone holding too much power feels threatened.

Yet Joseph, told in a dream of the approaching danger, got Jesus and his mother to safety. But what of the other children; why were their parents not warned? Is God just as arbitrary when it comes to the lives of the innocent as a ruthless mortal can be? There is no satisfactory answer to that question. This tragic aspect of the Christmas story puts good and evil, light and darkness side by side, not only for us to get a clear look at both, but to ask us to make a commitment to which we will serve. If we try to ignore this hard reality, then what was the point of Christ coming to us in the first place?

The light came into the world to save us from the darkness that seeks and has the power to destroy. The struggle that began in a manger in Bethlehem continues into our world and our day. At times it may have appeared that darkness would overcome the light, but the light continues to survive and shine in anyone who has looked at the dark side of themselves and turned away from it to seek something life-giving and holy.

It doesn't take the murder of the innocent for someone to slip into the grip of evil. It just takes a heart that is indifferent, that can ignore, that can sing "Joy to the World" without a thought for those who live without joy. The only way we can honestly make the claim that we are people of light is if we look squarely into the darkness and not only turn away from it but seek to bring the Light of Christ that is within us wherever we can. We can't change the suffering of the past, we can't erase our own mistakes, but we can keep the darkness from spreading by bringing light to our corner of the world in our own time. A single flame can enlighten a whole life and bring it God. We have been given the power to do that. That light can be our Christmas gift to the world.

God bless, *Fr. Alan*

Sunday, January 3

- ▶ [WATCH THE SERVICE](#) at 10:00 am
- ▶ **COFFEE HOUR** on Zoom at 10:45 am

Navigating this Service

Use our [Morning Prayer text](#) or follow the Book of Common Prayer, pg. 75.

Calendar

Sunday, January 3

Family Service

9:15 am on YouTube

Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

Wednesday, January 6

Virtual Youth Groups

7pm MS / 8pm HS on Zoom

Thursday, January 7

Bible Study

10:00 am on Zoom

Adult Choir Virtual Rehearsal

7:15 pm on Zoom

Sunday, January 10

Feb/Mar Network Deadline

Virtual Church School

8:45 am on Zoom

Morning Prayer

10:00 am on YouTube

Virtual Coffee Hour

10:45 am on Zoom

Upcoming Events

Family Service to tell the Christmas Story

Watch on YouTube: at 9:15 am

The Christmas Story will be told this year as part of a special virtual presentation of the Family Service! While Virtual Church School is on winter break you can join Fr. Alan and the Rev. Sally as they tell the Christmas Story beginning with the prophet Isaiah's message of the coming of the Messiah, through Christ's birth and the Epiphany.

The final presentation of this service will be available January 3 on YouTube starting at 9:15 am. *Missed a week?* All services can be watched at any time for your convenience.

The Family Service will be held in place of Virtual Church School on the above dates only. Virtual lessons resume on Sunday, January 10 for Church School and Wednesday, January 6 for Youth Groups.

Annual Parish Reports

Due by: Friday, January 15, 2021

If you are a group or committee chair and you would like to have a report included in the Annual Report, please send it to communications@standrewsaa.org by Friday, January 15, 2021.

The Annual Report will be available on the parish website on Wednesday, January 27, 2021.

Announcements

Black Lives Matter Yard Signs Available

We have work to do ending racism and supporting our African-American neighbors!

The Social Justice Ministry has created a **free yard sign** for you. To get your sign, please call Marjory Luther (665-8106) or Shirley Harden (674-0951).



DONATE ONLINE with WeShare

Prelude: Noël

Henri Mulet (1878-1967)

Opening Hymn: The First Nowell

Hymnal, no. 109



1 The first No - well the an - gel did say
 2 They look - ed up and saw a star
 3 And by the light of that same star
 4 This star drew nigh to the north - west,
 5 Then en - tered in those wise men three



1 was to cer - tain poor shep - herds in fields as they lay;
 2 shin - ing in the east be - yond them far,
 3 three wise men came from coun - try far;
 4 o'er Beth - le - hem it took its rest,
 5 full re - v - erent - ly up - on their knee,



1 in fields as they lay, keep - ing their sheep,
 2 and to the earth it gave great light,
 3 to seek for a king was their in - tent,
 4 and there it did both stop and stay
 5 and of - fered there in his pres - ence



1 on a cold win - ter's night that was so deep.
 2 and so it con - tin - ued both day and night.
 3 and to fol - low the star where - ev - er it went.
 4 right o - ver the place where Je - sus lay.
 5 their gold, and myrrh, and frank - in - cense.

Refrain



No - well, No - well, No - well, No - well,



born is the King of Is - ra - el.

6 Then let us all with one accord
 sing praises to our heavenly Lord;
 that hath made heaven and earth of nought,
 and with his blood our life hath bought.

Refrain

Opening Sentences

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 78

Preces

Hymnal, no. S-33
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 80

Invitatory

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 80

Jubilate

Hymnal, no. S-11
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 82

Psalm 84:1-8

- 1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! *
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.
- 2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
- 3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.
- 4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.
- 5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs,*
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.
- 6 They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.
- 7 Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; *
hearken, O God of Jacob.
- 8 Behold our defender, O God; *
and look upon the face of your Anointed.

Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:7-14

Thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
"Save, O Lord, your people,
the remnant of Israel."

See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,

among them the blind and the lame, those with child and
those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.
With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.
Hear the word of the Lord, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
For the Lord has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

Canticle: *The Third Song of Isaiah*

Hymnal, no. S-223
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 87

The Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

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 observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be

born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

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 also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 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 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.

Sermon

Fr. Alan Gibson

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We depend on our eyes, a lot. As someone who started wearing glasses in the second grade this has always been alarmingly clear. Studies show that children with five senses in good, working order learn more by seeing than with the other four senses, combined. That may change as we grow and begin to favor one of the other four senses in how we receive information. Still, the vast majority of people rely on their vision to gain most of their knowledge of the world. If we see it, we are more likely to believe it.

So, what does that say about Faith, and God? And all those things we can't quite capture with our eyes, or our hands, or our ears, or anything other than our hearts? It seems odd that we must depend on something other than our strongest senses to know the God who gave us the ability to see and feel and hear, in the first place.

We've just read the familiar story of the wise men from the East who came to Jerusalem looking for the infant King of the Jews. They had done a little research before setting out on their trip. They learned that a king would be born in Israel and that a heavenly light would announce this event. But they didn't know exactly where the king would be born. It didn't really matter. They had seen the star, and that was all the evidence

they required to start their journey. They trusted that along the way they would find the help they needed to complete their search.

After consulting Herod and the religious scholars in Jerusalem, the wise men learned that the king they sought was to be born in Bethlehem, so off they went, the star leading the way. There they found him, in what was probably a humble house in a small town. Without hesitation, without questions or verifications, they went in and presented their gifts. What must have seemed like an improbable venture when they began was now successfully completed. It had been a long shot, but now their search was over. It sounds like a story of amazing good fortune, as you would expect from a bunch of astrologers.

But all along, the wise men had something besides a star and the input of minor royalty to guide them. They had faith, which taught them to look for the star in the first place and then follow it. How did they come to faith? The seed was probably planted by something they saw or heard or touched – a book of scripture or a story they were told, perhaps. But that's not what set them on the road. They were not chasing after some odd light in the sky; they were following something that sprang from their hearts. The new light in the heavens was nothing compared to the new light that appeared in the hearts of those longing for God.

St. Matthew tells us that the light of the star led the wise men from their homes in the East to Bethlehem. Once they found Jesus, the star disappeared. A new light would now guide the wise to places they couldn't even imagine, much less see.

The same light of faith will lead us as clearly as it led them so that we may offer the gifts of our lives, gifts far more valuable than gold, frankincense, or myrrh. We will not need a star to guide us; all we have to do is trust our own hearts to lead us to the God we seek.

There is much of God's goodness that we can know from our senses, but the most intimate connection with God comes from setting aside those reliable tools and trusting that most vulnerable part of ourselves. That's where faith lives. That's what set those ancient star gazers on a journey. Where will faith take us? Your heart is where you will find that answer.

The Prayers

Collect of the Day

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Anthem: *Die Konige (Weinachtslieder)* Peter Cornelius (1824-1874)
Alan Gibson, Baritone

Three kings from Persian lands afar to Jordan follow the pointing star: And this the quest of the travellers three, where the new-born King of the Jews may be. Full royal gifts they bear for the King: Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

The star shines out with steadfast ray; the kings to Bethlehem make their way, and there in worship they bend the knee, as Mary's child in her lap they see; their royal gifts they show to the King: Gold, incense, myrrh are their offering.

Thou child of man, lo, to Bethlehem the kings are trav'ling, travel with them! The star of mercy, the star of grace, shall lead thy heart to its resting place. Gold, incense, myrrh thou canst not bring: Offer thy heart to the infant King, offer thy heart!

General Thanksgiving

Book of Common Prayer, pg. 101

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Concluding Versicle

Hymnal, no. S-54

Closing Hymn: *We Three Kings*

Hymnal, no. 128



1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are, bear - ing
 2 Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I: in - cense
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and



1 gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
 2 bring to crown him a - gain, King for ev - er,
 3 owns a De - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing,
 4 life of gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing,
 5 God and Sac - ri - fice; heaven sings al - le -



1 moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 2 ceas - ing nev - er o - ver us all to reign.
 3 glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship him, God Most High.
 4 bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 5 lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.



O ————— star of won - der, star of night,



star with roy - al beau - ty bright; west - ward lead - ing,



still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

Postlude: *Trio on "Kings of Orient"*

Thomas M. Kuras (1950-1997)

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