

HOME BY ANOTHER WAY – Pastor Jerome Evavold – January 3, 2021

Life with Jesus will never be the same. After experiencing Jesus in our lives, there's no way we can go home the same way we came. It's too late. Nothing will be the same now.

Think about that. If you had never heard of Jesus before or if you had never heard of his birth and then you heard it for the first time. How could you forget it?

On this Sunday when we begin the Epiphany Season in the church we read the text of the coming of the magi or wise men to visit the baby Jesus. After being there and leaving gifts, they are warned in a dream not to go home the way they came, that is through Jerusalem.

King Herod had asked them to search for the birth child and to return to tell him so he could go and pay homage to the baby also which was a lie. He was threatened by him and would want to destroy him.

So after the warning, the magi return home by another way.

But as one theologian has said, "even if the Magi had not been warned by an angel to go home by another way, there is no doubt that they, who had found the baby Jesus as the long awaited Messiah and worshiped him, would not have gone home the same way. They had seen God who had become one of us. Now their lives would be changed forever.

As I read about the wise men visiting Jesus, that statement jumped out at me –"They went home by another way." What was their home that they were going back to? They were from the far East. They were not from the community Jesus was part of, but of course, as we would learn, Jesus sees the value in every single person.

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There is a story about an old man who was walking along a beach and he noticed a young girl ahead of him picking up starfish and tossing them into the sea.

He asked her why she was doing this. The little girl said that a starfish stranded on the beach when the tide went out would die if left in the morning sun. The man said, "but the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish. How can your efforts make any difference?"

The little girl looked down the beach at all of the stranded starfish and then stared at the one in her hand. As she tossed it back into the salt water waves, she answered, "It makes a difference to this one."

Jesus makes a difference in the lives of everyone and each person makes a difference in the lives of others.

Coming from the far East, these wise men seemed to be strange visitors to the manger scene in Bethlehem. It is thought that they came from Persia, modern day Iran.

They were aliens. They were not Jews. The bible does not say they were kings. It also does not say there were only 3 of them. There could have been several more than that. It just lists 3 different gifts they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These wise men or magi as they were called were considered to be searchers. They were searching for the Christ Child.

We hear that word used often today. Lots of people would consider themselves to be searchers. In fact we could all call ourselves that.

In a sense, we are always on a search for God. In that way, we can relate to these wise men. They are led by a star to the birthplace of Jesus.

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Most of us love Christmas as a time to gather with family and friends, except this year. But we like hearing those Christmas songs each year.

And we like the food we share and the exchange of gifts. But, of course the greatest meaning of Christmas is not any of that, but the birth of the one who gives us eternal life.

When we leave this worship time, we can't leave what has happened behind us, but we take it with us. This week, we begin the Epiphany Season. Epiphany is a time when we focus on the light that has come into our world through the coming of the Christ Child.

In one of the Ylvisaker songs, Drawn to the Light, we have often sung in church, we find the words, "People who walked in darkness have sought the light in the heart of the darkest night. Just when we thought all would be lost, we were drawn to the light of God."

"Where is the sun? Oh, there will be none! The lamb is the one who is shining bright, bids us to come! Life has begun when we're drawn to the light of God." "Dawn is in sight! Gone is the night, drawn to the light and morning. Glorious and bright, oh, what a sight to be drawn to the light of God."

We experience that light in the words of our Epiphany Bible Lessons as we welcome Jesus in our world and into our lives. We also experience the coming of light in the Epiphany Season as the days start to get longer again.

So again, the Word of God reminds us to take the promises of God with us as we live our lives. Now after hearing God's Word, we can't help but go home by another way.