

**Anglican Church of Freiburg, Homily Notes
Epiphany Sunday Jan 9, 2022, Matthew 2:1-12**

They who have ears to hear His message,
they who have ears, now let them hear;
they who would learn the way of wisdom,
let them hear God's Word,
let them hear God's Word.

*God has spoken to His people,
hallelujah!*

*And His words are words of wisdom,
hallelujah!*

If you are asked a question- what was the most exciting journey you have undertaken and why? What would be our response?

If someone asks you Have you truly had a Jesus encounter? An Epiphany experience for yourselves, What would we say?

Epiphany is all about a journey. From the excitement of seeing a star, through the enchantments of a palace to the euphoria of a manger- it's all about a star, a special star, a setting out for a journey- and such a journey (as T S Eliot would call it) , the meandering into Herod's chamber, the journeying again, the reaching, finding, beholding, worshipping, opening treasure boxes, and returning home in a different route. ἐπιφάνω in Greek would mean to appear, to reveal or to shine upon, to make manifest.

This morning I would like to draw your attention to four responses to Jesus the child that we read in Matthew 2:1-12.

Herod:

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;

Why was King Herod Frightened?

Herod was a power maniac and he feared anything that would be a threat to the throne. The rumours of a Messiah was in the air since the resistance of the Empire was evident and strong. Lo and Behold the travellers come and ask- Where is he who would be the king? We have seen his star?

Post colonial critiques of the harbingers of power during the regimes of the Empire brings out of shadows the manifestations of this fear.
Herod was full of fear.

What did he do?

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 all about the Messiah

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

Why do you think was this detailed seeking and the secrecy?

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."

Paying homage meant getting rid of the child as he later tried to do. Friends, Herod is just a symbol of much innocent blood, especially that of the vulnerable that was shed for the sake of illegitimate power.

A response of a fear psychosis, the quest to get rid of the babe from one's life.

I do not want Christ to interfere in my life in any way.

It is a Response of ANIMOSITY to the Epiphany.

The chief priests and Scribes

calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, Herod 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.'"

They knew all about the Messiah but were not bothered about seeking or finding the Messiah.

They knew exactly where he would be born
 They knew of the paradigmatic shift where the least shall become first
 They knew that one coming would be the shepherd of the people Israel

Knowing about Christ and Knowing Christ are not the same.
 They knew but did not bother, to seek, to find or to pay homage.

The challenge of the head knowledge is what makes the God search less exciting sometime. But when it becomes a seeking of the heart, a seeking that is passionately genuine then the Epiphany could be an exhilarating experience.

The second response thus is a Response of Passivity/ Apathy to the Epiphany- An I Don't Care/ It Does not Bother Me kind of response.

The Magi

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."

The observed the star
 The set out on a journey
 They did lose track on the way and ended up with Herod

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.

They journeyed on, reached the place where Jesus was, saw him, worshipped him, gave him gifts, and being warned of Herod in a dream took a different route.

Epiphany is a reminder of our journeys

Our focus drifting away from the star to the pompousness of palaces
 Our trysts with the Herods
 Our Resuming of the Journey
 And Our God Encounters- Our Epiphanies
 And not to Forget- The Warning Signals to take new roads

We three kings of Orient are;
 bearing gifts we traverse afar;
 field and fountain, moor and mountain,
 following yonder star.
 A Response of Creative and Sincere Pursuit or Seeking

The Star

And Finally we Must take a look at that special star. It was a **Shining Star**- the Wise Ones could easily spot it from the crowd. It had its own peculiar difference that helped it stand apart. It was a **Guiding Star**- guiding the wandering traveller to the destination. It was a **Waiting Star**, patiently waiting outside when the travellers lost their way lured by the palace, leaning on their human wisdom and not relying on the mysteries of God. It was a **Joy Giving Star**, the travellers were filled with profound joy when they realised that the star indeed was still there. It was a **Pointing Star**. It stopped pointing to where the babe was and set the scene for the Epiphany,
 What kind of a star are we?

How do we sum up the Four Responses?
 A Response of Animosity to the Epiphany
 A Response of Passivity/ Apathy to the Epiphany
 A Response of Creative Seeking to the Epiphany
 A Response of Supportive Assisting to the Epiphany

*O star of wonder, star of night,
 star with royal beauty bright,
 westward leading, still proceeding,
 guide us to Thy perfect light. Amen*