

An Aha! Moment©

Matthew 2:1-12

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“Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” asked the Wise Men – the magi.

Where is the child? Where can we see him? How can we find this Christ-child?

We call this Sunday, when we talk about the magi finding Jesus, knowing when they saw him that he was the one – we call it Epiphany. It was an “Aha!” moment in time.

When we suddenly see something and finally we “get it” – like - “it just dawned on me!” or “I’ve seen the light!” Those are called epiphanies. It’s something we didn’t quite understand, or recognize, but then – suddenly we do! We finally perceive it. Understand it. It’s an Epiphany!

Epiphany is something that is manifest; something that is readily perceived by the senses and especially by the sense of sight.

As we celebrated Christmas this year, did you have an “Aha!” moment – sometime when you suddenly saw Jesus in a different, or new way? A new light, so to speak? Were you searching for him – and did you find him?

If you did not find him, or you’re not sure whether you did or not, maybe you were looking in the wrong places. Where did you look? In the lights of the Christmas tree? In the gifts under the tree? In the love of family and friends?

Did you see him here on Christmas Eve in the light of the candles, singing “Silent Night, Holy Night?” Looking in the beloved faces of your sisters and brothers in Christ?

If you found him; if you saw Christ in a new way this Christmas Season, then praise God! Hold on to that epiphany with all you have. Don’t let it slip away in the throngs of every day busyness.

But, my guess is that many of us did not exactly have an Epiphany; that we waited and hoped for that moment when suddenly we saw things new and different and we shouted “Aha! Now I see him!”

As much as Christmas is glorious and beautiful, it’s also busy and stressful and it can take a toll on us and frankly that isn’t always conducive to having those reflective,

epiphany moments. And they can happen in such a twinkling of an eye that you could easily miss it in a busy Christmas season.

But I want to encourage you to not give up looking. In fact, now that Christmas – at least the major celebration of it with shopping and wrapping and baking and decorating all behind you – now this just might be the perfect time to sit down and close your eyes and wait for it. Sometimes just being quiet helps. It opens that space to be able to “see” in a new way.

But, there is one other place to look for Christ. Have you heard the legend of the fourth wise man whose name was Artaban?

He travelled from Persia to meet the other three wise men, carrying with him his gifts for the new King - three precious jewels - a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl.

On his way Artaban met an old Jew by the roadside, who was almost dying from fever. He decided to stay with the sick man until he was well and so he missed meeting up with the other three wise men who were on their way southwards.

The Jew told Artaban that the prophets said that the King would be born in Bethlehem. Artaban sold his costly sapphire to raise money for the sick man, and only when the man had recovered, did Artaban set out for Bethlehem. When he arrived in Bethlehem and made enquiries, he was told that the other wise men had left 3 days before.

A young mother told him that the family he was seeking had fled, and that the people of Bethlehem were anxious because it was rumored that King Herod was going to punish the town. While Artaban was in Bethlehem, wondering what to do next, the soldiers arrived with orders to kill all the baby boys they could find.

The young mother he had made friends with was very frightened because she had a young son, so when the captain of the soldiers ordered the child to be killed, Artaban came to the rescue and gave his ruby to the soldiers to buy the boy's life.

Artaban now had only one of his gifts left - the pearl, but he decided to keep searching for the king. Finally, after 30 years searching, he came to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. The city was buzzing with talk about the man named Jesus who claimed to be the Son of God and who was to be crucified.

Artaban wondered whether he could use his last jewel to save the life of this man, Jesus. But as he hurried through the streets of the city Artaban came across a young girl who was crying. She told Artaban she was crying because she was going to be sold into slavery to pay her father's debts.

Artaban could not pass by and leave the girl crying so he gave her the pearl, the last of his jewels. At that moment Jesus passed by carrying his cross to the place of execution. He looked at Artaban, and on his face Artaban could see three big drops of blood that looked to him just like a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl.

He knew that Jesus was the king he had been looking for all these years, and he also knew that although he was not able to worship his King, his precious gifts had been sold, or given away, to help others, and that was the same as giving them to Jesus. (Author unknown)

And Jesus said: 'Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?"

And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:34-40)

Look for him in the faces of those he puts before us to help. It could be that that is where you will have your Epiphany!

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