

Sermon: January 2, 2022

“What Are We Searching For?”

I have come like the wise ones from the East bearing gifts as we begin another year and reflect on the story of the Magi who followed a star to find the promised king, diligently searching until they found him.

The first gift I bring is a Prayer for finding lost things .
I don't know about your house, but in our house Eddie and I spend a lot of time searching for things. You will hear the constant question: have you seen my?

glasses

Purse

Book

Glasses

The check I just had to deposit?

My glasses

The car keys finding lost keys usually involves turning over the couch.

When we have exhausted our search, we remember St. Anthony the finder of lost things and say the St. Anthony prayer. When I share this prayer with people, they often laugh at me until they try it in desperation in their own homes. They always come and tell me, “You know, Lucy, that Saint Anthony Prayer really works!” My first Gift is the St. Anthony Prayer: “Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, please come 'round. Something's lost that must be found.”

You're welcome!

The second gift I have brought for each of you is a star.
I love looking at the stars, but it is often hard to see them in Westminster with all the lights. When I do have the opportunity, I can usually find a few constellations like the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper and Orion's Belt. I recognize the great Milky Way, a galaxy of which we are a part.

When I see the stars, I realize again and again how small I am in the whole scheme of things. I always think of the wise ones searching diligently for that Christmas star.

In 1997 after 41/2 years of being blind because of a misdiagnoses, I had cataract surgery and it was miraculous. The sky was bluer than I remembered and everything looked sparkling clean.

The evening of the day my bandages were removed, my husband agreed to set out to search for the Hale-Bop Comet also known as The Great Comet of 1997. We had to drive out of the city into the country because of the Lunt pollution. We drove and drove until my husband remarked, "If that farmer would turn off their outside lights, we might be able to find it!"

We passed the farm and pulled over only to discover the bright light was the comet!

Two weeks later on Holy Thursday, we each walked out of our respective churches to find parishioners standing together all looking up. That comet had appeared right above our churches! It was the perfect discovery right after regaining my sight. It reminded to watch for other signs and wonders.

So today I have brought each of you a star. It is a paper Star with a word on it. I invite you to take one and carry it home. Put it in a place where you can see it every day for the upcoming year. Many churches have begun doing this on Epiphany. then sharing how their star word became a message from God, an epiphany, in their life. Throughout the year many found their star word took on greater meaning.

If you are watching on FB live streaming or Zoom and would like a star word leave me a message in the comments and I will mail you one.

The third gift I bring is an image
Every year when we begin the Season of Epiphany on January 6th, we read the story only found in the gospel of Matthew about the Wise Men or Magi who followed a star that led them on a search for a new born king. . Imagine these star-gazers traveling by foot or riding camels or horses. They had to travel by night to see the star and rest by day. There were no restaurants and no motels, so they had to bring their own food and perhaps rely on the kindness of strangers.

We only assume there were three because of the three gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh they presented to honor Jesus. But the story does not say how many

On the screen you can see "The Magi's Dream," a sculpture portraying an angel warning the magi in a dream, to go home another

Cathédrale St-Lazare
Autun France 1125-1135

Carved by Gislebertus who carved four scenes from Matthew's Gospel: the Wise Men before Herod, the Adoration of the Wise Men, the Dream of the Wise Men, shown here, and the Flight into Egypt.

Here he adopts a Romanesque convention of showing the three kings in bed together under the one blanket. It must have been uncomfortable in the bed, wearing their crowns, but this was of course the only way of indicating that they really were kings. The embroidered blanket seems to move in harmony with the face, halo, sleeves and wing of the angel in one graceful, circular movement. It is as though the angel has slipped suddenly and silently in. With one hand he points to the star which will guide them safely home. With the other he touches one of the kings, who opens his eyes. The angel conveys a wonderful sense of gentleness.

The story, only found in the gospel of Matthew, reminds us that God's presence is manifested in Jesus. The Magi believe the star they followed was a light to enlighten the nations.

This holy child, Jesus, was born not only for Jews, but also for Gentiles. This debate was one which the early church struggled. You can see evidence of this struggle in the letters written to churches by Paul and others in the Epistles following the four gospels.

Our churches today still struggle with who can become a member, what is expected of them and who can receive communion to name a few.

If the years of pandemic taught us anything, it has taught us to do things a different way. We have had to change our travel plans, our celebrations and the way we do worship. I commend you, members of Trinity on the way you have continued to find different ways. I bless the leadership for continuing to put the health of the members before opening for in-person worship, continuing safe practices and providing for those who are unable or unwilling to attend in-person worship.

I pray 2022 will be a different, perhaps a sweeter year in which we can confidently travel to visit our children and grandchildren, and share a meal with friends without fear. I am sure the Corona 19 Virus like so many other plagues throughout history, will be contained if not eradicated.

With hope for a sweeter new year, I have brought a fourth gift a few pieces of candy for each of you, as a sign of hope for a sweeter new year.

We begin a new season, Epiphany, a season of signs and wonders, a season of manifestations of God's presence as Jesus accepts his call to ministry. Whatever struggles we face in the coming year, we will be reminded of the stories of God's presence in the life and ministry of Jesus; his baptism with the words my "beloved child," the wedding at Cana, where there was enough when it seemed all was lost, the calling his disciples, ordinary people with doubts and questions just like us, and the mysterious unexplainable transfiguration, with the ancient ones and Jesus glowing, transfiguring before the eyes of a few of Jesus' disciples.

Like the light of the Star, these stories will guide us to Christ.

As we continue to do things a different way, may we be even more aware of the signs and wonders in our own lives in 2022.

May we find the power of the light of Christ to guide us and give us strength!

The fifth and final gift I have for you is a poem for the New Year by Amanda Gorman, the Youth Poet Laureate who read a poem on Inauguration Day

"New Day's Lyric"

May this be the day
We come together.

Mourning, we come to mend,
Withered, we come to weather,
Torn, we come to tend,
Battered, we come to better.

Tethered by this year of yearning,
We are learning
That though we weren't ready for this,
We have been readied by it.
Steadily we vow that no matter
How we are weighed down,
We must always pave a way forward.

This hope is our door, our portal.
Even if we never get back to normal,
Someday we can venture beyond it,
To leave the known and take the first steps.

So let us not return to what was normal,
But reach toward what is next.

What was cursed, we will cure.

What was plagued, we will prove pure.

Where we tend to argue, we will try to agree,
Those fortunes we forswore, now the future we foresee,
Where we weren't aware, we're now awake;
Those moments we missed
Are now these moments we make,
The moments we meet,
And our hearts, once all together beaten,
Now all together beat.

Come, look up with kindness yet,
For even solace can be sourced from sorrow.
We remember, not just for the sake of yesterday,
But to take on tomorrow.

We heed this old spirit,
In a new day's lyric,
In our hearts, we hear it:

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.

Be bold, sang Time this year,
Be bold, sang Time,
For when you honor yesterday,
Tomorrow ye will find.

Know what we've fought
Need not be forgot nor for none.
It defines us, binds us as one,
Come over, join this day just begun.

For wherever we come together,
We will forever overcome. Amen.