

January 7, 2024

Epiphany Sunday: "Hitch Your Camel to a Star"

FORT COLLINS MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP

300 E. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO 80524

Worship: 10:00 AM

Pastor: Steve Ramer

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SEASON OF ADVENT

During Advent we are called to wait for the coming of God's Chosen One; the One who will help birth a new world, the world that God desires. We are simultaneously giddy with excitement and filled with anxiety since so many of the details still need to be worked out. But like intrepid investigative reporters, during our time of preparation, we must seek to uncover the who, what, where, when, and how of this great and radical Advent hope!

1. GATHERING

Musical Prelude (John)

Call to Worship (based on Isaiah 42:1-11)

L: God says, "This is my servant, the One whom I uphold, the one who I have chosen and in whom my soul delights.

P: I have filled them with my spirit, so that they will bring justice to every nation.

L: They will not shout or raise their voice or even make loud speeches in the street!

P: They are kind, not even breaking an already bruised reed nor blowing out an already flickering candle.

L: My Servant will bring lasting justice for all without losing hope, courage, or giving up until justice comes to all the earth..."

P: God also calls us, taking us by the hand and giving us power to bring justice here on the earth.

L: We too will be a light to the nations — the fulfillment of God's promise. We too will open the eyes that are blind and set free those imprisoned in the darkest of dungeons.

P: We will sing to the Lord a new song and sing God's praises to the ends of the earth!

L: The mighty seas and everything in them roar with their praises to God, and so too will all peoples from every corner of this world praise God . . .

Opening Prayer

Congregational Singing

Welcome and Passing of the Peace

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also, with you.

All: Let us offer one another signs of peace, reconciliation, and love.

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." — Leonard Cohen

"I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness because it shows me the stars." — Og Mandino

2. HEARING GOD'S WORD

Scriptures: Matthew 2:1-12

Jesus was born in the Judean town Bethlehem, while Herod was king. One day, Astrologers from the East showed up in Jerusalem and they began asking around about where they might find the new-born king of the Judeans. They said, "we have been observing his star from the time it appeared and we are searching for him so that we can pledge our allegiance to him."

Now when King Herod heard about this, he was visibly shaken . . . so he called together the top priests and all the local experts, and he pressed them for information about where the Messiah was supposed to be born.

They explained to him, "At Bethlehem in Judea."

Then Herod called the Astrologers in for a secret meeting, to ascertain the exact moment when the

star had appeared. Then he sent them on to Bethlehem, with the instructions, "Go and make a thorough search for the child, and when you have found his location, report back to me, so that I may too go and honor him."

And the star continued to guide them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they had noticed that the star had stopped, they were beside themselves with joy. And when they entered, they saw the child with Mary, his momma, and they fell down and pledged their total obedience to him. Then, they opened their treasure chests and presented their new Lord, tributes of gold, incense, and myrrh.

But because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, when they left, they journeyed back to their own country by a different route.



SERMON: "Hitch Your Camel to a Star" (Steve)

This morning we celebrate Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means "to make manifest." It's also a season when we see Jesus' divine mission revealed to the world, especially to the Gentile world as represented by those foreign Magi. So who were these "wise guys"? And where were they headed?

3. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Congregational Singing

Response

Joys and Concerns

Offering & Music (John)

Sending (based on Isaiah 60:1-6)

Get up, be brilliant, for your light has come and God's glory is shining on you. Yes, for a time, darkness does seem to cover the earth and thick darkness blinds us all. But the LORD's sun will arise upon you and lighten your way. Even rulers and nations shall see the brightness of your dawn.

Look up, open your eyes and look around, it is happening. Within the light you will be radiant. Your heart shall thrill and rejoice, and you will be beside yourselves with joy! Just as if a multitude of camels arrived on your doorstep, bringing not only gold and frankincense, but hope, courage, and love.

"From my point of view, God is the light that illuminates the darkness, even if it does not dissolve it, and a spark of divine light is within each of us." — Pope Francis

"Help us to be ever faithful gardeners of the spirit, who know that without darkness nothing comes to birth, and without light nothing flowers." — May Sarton