

**THE GIFT OF LIGHT**  
**Isaiah 60:1-6 & Matthew 2:1-12**

Poetry, along with music, speak in ways that touch the soul. Poet, Robert Frost shares these insightful words:

“I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged into a wood, and I  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

Here we are the start of a brand new year. Last weekend most of the seats were taken, but as you can see as you look around you, it's not hard to find a seat this morning, the Sunday after Christmas. The crowds have gone home but like the wise men from the East, we have come to worship Christ the new-born King. We follow the light that leads us to this place. For us, Christmas did not come to pass. Christmas came to stay. There is a verse from this ancient visit of Royalty that I would like us to reflect on this morning. “And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.” I wonder, what would it mean for all of us to take a new road home in 2012? Are there some things we need to do or maybe need to do differently? What are we about here at St. James? Where are we going?

There has been a lot about leaders in the news this past week. There is the North Korean leader who died and is now being replaced by his son. Apparently there was a clash of clergymen at Bethlehem feuding over the sacred space. Then we have all the news about political leaders vying for the oval office in our country. But I am not going to focus on these leaders and what is being said. Instead like the wise men in today's gospel, they pay no heed to their leader Herod and his instructions. Once they find the Christ children, they follow a different way.

According to this morning's gospel, the wise men didn't return they way they came. After encountering Jesus it wasn't business as usual. They returned to their country another way ... on the road less traveled, without the benefit of a roadmap or for that matter, even a road. There was no GPS on their camels. Such is a life of faith.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." By faith, Noah built a boat in the desert that saved his family from the flood. By faith, Abraham when he was called, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith, Moses chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. "The righteous live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

For some of us, living by sight is much more practical. I like to know what is going on and have a handle on things. I'm an advocate of goal setting and planning. If we don't plan our destination how will we know if we have arrived?

Unfortunately life is not so predictable. Two plus two does not always equal four in the math of life. We do not always reap what we sow. Illness, like the weather, is no respecter of persons. It rains on the just and the unjust. So what are we to make of all this?

A wise person once said, “I said to the one who stood at the gate of a new year, “Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.” The reply, “Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than any known way.”

So on I go not knowing, I would not if I might.  
I would rather walk in the dark with God  
Than walk alone in the light.  
I would rather walk with God by faith,  
Than walk alone by sight.

“And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.” So, here on the first day of this brand new year, let us make a resolution by God’s grace to take the road less traveled ... it could make all the difference! The next few weeks we will talk about what this road less traveled might look like for our St. James family.

Yet, just as the wise men discovered, regardless of where this journey will take us, it starts with something small ... God in the flesh ... seeking baby Jesus. (Run Stonebraker video.) Amen.

