
Sunday 3 January – Epiphany

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6 & Matthew 2:1-12

Isaiah 60:1-6

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Matthew 2:1-12

The Magi visit the Messiah

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Reflection

As we read this genealogy at the beginning of Matthew, I'm reminded that all of these names belonged to real people. Real people who lived real lives, interacting with other people. And I suspect that most of the time they would have had no idea that their name, their story was being woven into God's great rescue plan. His promise to draw his people back to Him.

It's beautiful that God's plan to bring his people back to Him involved very real, very normal people. If we look at this list we find sibling rivalry, adultery, death, murder, heartache, promise, betrayal, loyalty, belief, unbelief, and lots and lots of grace. It is such a relief to me that God uses normal people to bring about His plans. These guys were not perfect. We cannot even be sure that they all knew God. But He knew them and worked His plan through their lives.

God's plan to send Jesus into the world was established so long ago. Before Abram and Sarai even knew that they were unable to conceive, God had already planned to use their story to bring about His story.

In the same way, God has plans for our lives. It is the greatest honour that when we pray we are able to align our hearts with God's heart and we begin to see His world as He sees it. This is possible because Jesus came to live with us, because He died and because God sent His Holy Spirit to be with us forever.

In a time of change and uncertainty it grounds me knowing that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that His words never fail.

So. When you wake, say to yourself 'Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you'. It is so easy to see the reality of the next line all around us 'darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples', but our hope is in the truth that our light HAS come, and the glory of the Lord does rise upon us. Satan does not want us to think about this truth, this light. He wants us to succumb to the darkness that is around us and is so prevalent. But God promises us that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5).

In our genealogy there were many moments of darkness. Even if we just remember some of King David's story. I wonder if he ever felt like the darkness might overcome him? But looking at the big picture, which this genealogy allows us to, we see that the light did indeed shine all the way throughout, pointing to Jesus birth. And now that He is here with us by the Holy Spirit, we have that light in us. Working through us to love and to bless the people that God has surrounded us with.

Amen

~ Gen Rylett ~