

In the name of the one whose star we follow, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

They are sometimes called “Wise Men”, and sometimes even called ‘Kings’, but the truth is that they were probably astrologers – star gazers. And the odds are that most people didn’t really think that they were all that smart, all that wise, probably in much the same way that we might regard whoever writes those little horoscope books.

So can you imagine the reaction that those travelers from the East probably evoked as they headed out the door on their journey?

‘Excuse us, you’re leaving your house, your family, and your job ... to follow a *star* ... to find yourself a *king*? Why don’t you hang on to your day job, and keep this star-gazing thing as a hobby? It was probably much the same reaction Noah got when he began to build his waterproof ark while the skies were still blue and there was no water anywhere in sight; or of Abraham when he left the comforts of home for an uncharted journey to who knows where.

And can’t you just imagine the *reaction* of those ‘Wise Men’ when they got where they were going - a barn in the middle of nowhere – and discovered that the ‘king’ they were seeking was a newborn baby, in diapers. *This* is what we traveled half a continent to behold? ... a *baby* whose family couldn’t even manage to get a reservation at the local Holiday Inn?

It’s quite tempting, isn’t it to poke fun at those ‘wise men’. But, they really *were* wise. Think about it.

When those visitors from the East arrived, the ‘King of the Jews’ was not – obviously – quite ready to rule. So what an act of faith it *was* on their part to worship that diapered baby!

Those star gazers were wiser than anyone know. And we still have lots to learn from them, and from the trip they took. Those three ‘wise’ men didn’t

seek the king in the obvious places. They didn't look in palaces or amongst riches, and neither must we.

And because *they* were open to divine guidance – even from unexpected sources - we learn that even the stars can serve as God's instruments.

And from them we can also learn that 'epiphanies' happen when we look up for God's signs, not when we're looking down toward the predictable, toward the same old same old. We will always see more clearly by the light of God's star than by our own dim lights. Those wise men arrived late (hey, they *were* men, after all). They did not, apparently, arrive on the night of Christ's birth. But in God's eyes, no one is ever too late to be welcomed into God's presence.

And because they were foreigners – not Jews – we learn from them that this newborn 'king' wasn't just the 'King of the Jews'. Those visitors from who knows where are the first evidence we have that this newborn baby wasn't just some local big-wig, but the King of more than anyone could imagine.

And like them, we too are called to a life of imagination and boldness and faithfulness. Who would have believed that God would choose to arrive in a backwater in the middle of nowhere? But the reality is that we cannot believe what we will not imagine.

And something else we learn from those wise men is that once we see the King, we cannot linger. God's presence is a 'no loitering' zone. Just as those visitors from afar weren't allowed to stay very long, neither are we. Because there's a whole world out there – beginning right here in Old Lyme, Connecticut – a whole world that doesn't yet know the love of God that was offered and made known in that tiny, diapered baby.

And that's our job – to make that baby known. Amen.

The Rev. Nancy Miller