

Did you get a STAR WORD?

If not, and you'd like one, I'd like to invite you let Dan know in the comments below.

Or feel free to ask at any time.

I'll refer to them throughout this reflection

Although it's by no means essential to following along

If you either choose not to

Or are unable to access one

Or happen to be watching this as a recording

And if you're a writing and reflecting type

And if you've pen and paper handy

I'd invite you to write your word

At the top

Or the center of a page

And as this reflection

Meanders along the contours of the story

Like a camel caravan might meander along the contours of the landscape between

The Persian and Roman Empires

Perhaps your STAR WORD

Might help you think more deeply at the questions posed

This week's reflection tends to be more an invitation to ponder and reflect for yourself.

Those looking to inquire more deeply into the text

May be interested in last Epiphany's reflection

<https://knoxmetregina.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Sermon-%E2%80%93-January-10.pdf>

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Judeans? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

In her artist statement for "The Wise Ones' Dream," Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman writes that the Wise Ones are "ready and willing to discern God's will in the outward, tangible signs of Creation, as well as the inner contours of their own minds. God is in it all, and they are paying attention. Is this what it means to be wise?"

God is in it all, and they are paying attention.

Is this what it means to be wise?"

I've been thinking about this story

The story of the Wise Ones

The story of the Magi

And their journey

They are in a world that they know

That is predictable

And comfortable

But then there's this rupture

A star appears in the sky

That compels them to follow

Or have they been sent

Were they the ones interested?

Or are they acting on orders from up above

Or is what has compelled them an external force

By all accounts they travel a long way

And I've been wondering what their experience was

Of following a star

The story doesn't tell us much

Is it linear and predictable?

Does the star seem to them to appear in the same spot in the night sky

Each evening

Allowing them to get consistent bearing

Or does each new sighting of the star

Feel to them like the parameters of their journey have changed

Like they are constantly re-evaluating?

Required to second guess

Or completely re-think

Like they are constantly adjusting their expectations

Ever wondering if they are getting closer

And of course

Even if to them

There is a consistency in what they see overhead

There is also the situation

On the ground

Major rivers

Trade routes

Inhabited centers

Local political intrigue

Local attitudes towards outsiders

Likely required constant adjustment

Of course, here's the thing with sacred text

Is that sometimes we read ourselves into it

Which is one thing when we recognize it

And another thing when we don't
It's one thing when we're looking to extrapolate objective truth
And another when we're seeking support and wisdom
Perhaps I am thinking in this way about this story this year
Because it relates to an experience
Of ever-changing parameters
Of the weight of decision making
As the way forward seems clear
Seems linear for a little bit
Seems that abnormal is slowly becoming normal again
Only to watch the situation around suddenly
Once again become disorienting
So maybe I'm coming to this text
Looking for something
To inform how I am travelling at this moment
When what seemed reasonable
A few weeks ago
Suddenly seems less of a good idea
One of the gifts of sacred text
Is how they can be space
Where we might place that which we carry
So that we might look at it
With a bit of distance
To allow us to see
What we can't when we're right in it

Maybe this journey story
Can be exactly that space for us
Maybe we long for certainty
And struggle to navigate this moment
In its absence
Can we look at this text
And imagine how these ones whose story is told here
Kept one foot in front of the other
On days where it was uncertain
How did they keep their commitment to forward motion
When it seemed at the end of a long day's travel
That their destination had shifted
Some imagine that the travelers were three
This is certainly the depiction in our nativity sets
And on the bulletin art
But the reality is that the term in the text is simply plural
This story could be about 2 travelers
It could be about 20
So I wonder
Were they always in agreement about how they would proceed?
Or was their conflict along the way
And how did they navigate that?
How did they stay together?
Or, how did they know at which point they needed to part company
And how did they do so gracefully (or did they?)
The STAR WORD I pulled for myself

On the eve of Epiphany

Was CONVICTION

I've been thinking about that word

While writing this

What convictions are helping me navigate the moment in which I find myself?

What decisions are clearer because of a particular conviction?

What decisions feel higher stakes?

What decisions feel more open?

I wonder what your STAR WORD invites you to think about

As you ponder whether this story

Allows you to think about your own moment

The Magi

These Wise Ones

After this journey of discerning the signs external to them

They then needed to heed in the inner voice

Beckoning them home by another way

Once again called to trust

That way would open

As they put one foot in front of the other

I wonder what inner fortitude that took

I wonder what inner fortitude rises to meet us even now...

To end

A Blessing

For Those Who have Far to Travel

From the Rev. Jan Richardson...

A Blessing for Those Who Have Far to Travel (Jan Richardson)

If you could see
the journey whole,
you might never
undertake it,
might never dare
the first step
that propels you
from the place
you have known
toward the place
you know not.

Call it
one of the mercies
of the road:
that we see it
only by stages
as it opens
before us,
as it comes into
our keeping,
step by
single step.

There is nothing
for it
but to go,
and by our going
take the vows
the pilgrim takes:

to be faithful to
the next step;
to rely on more
than the map;
to heed the signposts
of intuition and dream;
to follow the star
that only you
will recognize;

to keep an open eye
for the wonders that
attend the path;
to press on
beyond distractions,
beyond fatigue,
beyond what would
tempt you
from the way.

There are vows
that only you
will know:
the secret promises
for your particular path
and the new ones
you will need to make
when the road
is revealed
by turns
you could not
have foreseen.

Keep them, break them,
make them again;
each promise becomes
part of the path,
each choice creates
the road
that will take you
to the place
where at last
you will kneel

to offer the gift
most needed—
the gift that only you
can give—
before turning to go
home by
another way.