

Gifts we bring (*Matthew 2:1-12*)

Epiphanies come to us in all shapes and sizes.

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One year, on Epiphany Sunday, I administered my first baptism as an ordained minister.

At the end of the sermon that day I quoted these words from the poem “Into This Silent Night,” by Ann Weems, which felt appropriate for encouragement as we continue to journey beyond this epiphany moment:

*Into this silent night
as we make our weary way
we know not where,
just when the night becomes its darkest
and we cannot see our path,
just then
is when the angels rush in,
their hands full of stars.*

Epiphanies come to us in all shapes and sizes: angels, stars, babies, water. They come in all sorts of moments: ordinary, simple, humble...sometimes, unexpected and bright. They come to us to show us how we might be changed deeply; they come to show us another road. Don't be afraid of being waylaid. Pause before that epiphany moment—take that other road with courage and hope as God shapes a bright new reality in us, one that is rich with God's grace.

We are given a new vision of who God is, and this cultivates in us a radical gratitude that manifests itself in so many ways. The gifts brought by the Magi are particularly poignant. They invite us to consider: What will you bring to the manger?

As God manifests God's self to us in new ways this season, we can bring our own special gifts that express what God's entrance into this world means to us. Whether it is gold and other treasures or a simple shepherd's prayer, whether it is a broken and hungry heart or eager hands and feet, whether it is bread and a meal shared together or a song lifted up in praise—may all be a genuine response to the gift of life to all of us in Jesus, God's only son.

Let me leave you with the poetry of another writer, Katie Cook:

*Let us go in peace now;
We have brought our gifts to the manger—
and for some of us
it was merely our broken selves—
but now, like the shepherds,
we must go back to our fields;
like the magi,
we must go home another way.*

*Let us go in peace now;
May this Holy Child guide our steps
into the new year
And give us the courage
to give birth to God's realm.*

My hope and prayer is that we will hold onto stars and babies, angels and shepherds, fields and fountains as we step into this new year—to be overwhelmed by joy and carried by it throughout every situation.