

FAITH @ HOME

Week of January 5, 2020

Second Sunday after Christmas

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 2:1-12

REFLECT: Have you ever traveled to see something wonderful and special? Maybe you went on a field trip with your school to a museum or to the zoo; or you went to the beach, or to see family members who live far away. The three wise men traveled very far to see Jesus because they knew he was special. They knew that Jesus would teach others about God.

The wise men also brought Jesus gifts, just like you might give someone you love a gift. A gift is a way to show a person that we love them and that they are important to us. The wise men gave Jesus gifts because they knew he would make the world better by showing us God's love, just like the people we love make us happier by showing us love.

God guided the wise men by a star. Jesus guides us by showing us how to live and love others. God doesn't really need us to give him presents. Instead, God wants us to do what is right, when we help others, and when we show love to the people around us. When we do those things, that's our gift to God.

RESPOND: Think of someone you love. What kind of gift would you like to give them? Now think about Jesus. Jesus shows us that God loves us just as much as our family and friends love us. Make or draw a gift out you would like to give to Jesus. It can be whatever you want. It could be a present, or something you'd like to say, or something you'd like to do for others. You could make something out of paper, clay, or with other crafts. If your gift is something you'd like to do or say, you could also draw a picture.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: JEREMIAH SIERRA



Jeremiah Sierra is currently the communications manager for Cities of Service, a nonprofit that works to change the way local government and residents work together. He has worked for a variety of other nonprofit organizations and Episcopal churches, most recently Trinity Church Wall Street, where he was the managing editor of the quarterly magazine. He has written for *Forward Day by Day* and other publications about faith. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and three-year-old daughter.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 2:1-12

REFLECT: Finally, the Magi have showed up within the Christmas story, even though Christmas Day has come and gone. They have been watching the stars in the heavens and have noticed the peculiar behavior of one star, which leads them to the newborn baby Jesus. And while he was born in the most meager and unlikely of places in Bethlehem, the Magi knew that this child was born to be a King. Of course, this terrified King Herod, who was the ruler of the land at the time. The birth of a new king meant that before too long, the current king would no longer be in power. Herod's fear and love of power blinded him to the power of love that was born as God's gift to humanity. Emmanuel--God with us. And yet, the Magi, who did not share Herod's same fears, traveled to meet the Christ-child and his mother, Mary, and they brought him gifts befitting a king. They believed the prophets who had foretold of the coming Messiah and bowed in worship when they met him. This child--both fully human and fully God--love incarnate.

RESPOND: How often do you get the chance to retell biblical stories? Sometimes, the best way to really learn the stories you hear in the Bible and to remember them well is by telling them again in your own words. Working with a grown-up, take some time to think about how you would tell this story of the Wise Men coming to visit the baby Jesus, and then tell it! You could create a comic strip, use little toy people, or share the story through a song. If your grown-up is on Facebook, they can look at "The Wandering Wisemen" for inspiration.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 2:1-12

REFLECT: The Magi who came from the east were not kings, as we so often portray them in our nativity plays. They were Zoroastrian priests. They followed the star to find out if the prophecies of the Old Testament--as well as the prophecies from their religion— of virgin births had been fulfilled. They immediately recognize Jesus' divinity, that he is indeed the King of the Jews, and they worship him. They are filled with joy as they kneel before him and give him extravagant gifts. The gifts are luxurious, they were extravagant, there is nothing practical about them. They give Jesus these gifts not because they have to, but because they want to, in order to honor him.

The gifts of the Magi remind us we are to honor God by giving to God the best of ourselves. God asks us to love God and our neighbor—that is the best of ourselves and the greatest gift we can give God.

RESPOND: Have you ever received a gift you were not expecting and a gift that could be considered “extravagant,” not necessarily in cost but in usefulness? How did it make you feel? Think about someone who may really need to feel the love of God right now; someone who needs to be reminded they are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. Give that person a gift for no reason other than because God loves them and they deserve to be reminded of that. Wrap the gift beautifully or decorate the envelope so that it looks and is special. It doesn't have to be expensive, it just needs to be a reminder that they are loved.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a

REFLECT: One of the most beautiful aspects of the Christian life is found right in this passage. We are adopted as God's children through Jesus by grace that is freely given. This is really good news in a world where many of us go to work and strive to be enough. In a world where we never feel like we're measuring up in our marriages and friendships. In a world that is constantly telling us to work harder, be smarter, try and do more. We live in a time where we look on Instagram and see other people being everything we are not. It is into this that God speaks a word of comfort. You are enough. I love you, simply because I love you. All striving ceases at the cross of Christ. As you work, parent, play, and live today, walk in this truth. The Father loves you. Not a better version of you or future you or even the potential you, but you, as you are, right now.

RESPOND: Take a 15 minute walk outside today. Whether you live in the city, suburbs, or rural area. Walk for 15 minutes in silence and take note of the world around you. Appreciate the beauty of God's creation and reflect on God's grace in creating you. If you can't walk outside, take a look at some photos and videos of nature. Marvel at God's beauty in creation.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CJ QUARTLBAUM



CJ is a writer and speaker from Brooklyn, NY. He spends most of his time hanging with his family, playing with his daughter, playing basketball, and reading. He's passionate about seeing the gospel spread in his city, in Brooklyn as it is in heaven. You can catch up with him on Twitter @CJ_Quartlbaum or at CJQuartlbaum.com

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