

DECEMBER 26, 2021; 1st Sunday after Christmas; SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church
Singers: Others

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson (No Power Point)

WELCOME AND PRAYER: Pastor Tom Olson

HYMN #32 “When Christmas Morn is Dawning” (Stand)

READING: Matthew 2:1-6 (Diane)

HYMN #53 (vss 1-3) “As with Gladness Men of Old”

READING: Matthew 2:7-8

HYMN #53 (vss 4&5) “As with Gladness Men of Old”

READING: Matthew 2:9-11 (Stand)

SPECIAL MUSIC:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN #331 “Away in A Manger” (2nd Tune)

SERMON TITLE: “AN UNEXPLAINABLE DAY”
Matthew 2:10-13; Pastor Tom Olson; December 26, 2021

MYSTERIOUS: One thing you learn after being a Christian for many years is that God’s ways are mysterious. You can’t understand them. You can’t predict them. You simply need to trust Him. In one instance God supernaturally let Peter out of jail with angelic help. In another instance God left Peter in jail to be executed. The same thing happened to the Apostle Paul. There are times in our lives when we experience miracles. There are other times in our lives when our prayers are not answered in the way we want. Two important verses to memorize are Isaiah 55:8&9 *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

DEMONSTRATED: There is nowhere in the Bible that demonstrates this any better than the day the wise men came to Bethlehem to visit the child Jesus and present their gifts. In the morning they were led by a supernatural star to the very place where Jesus was dwelling in safety. Then through dreams they were warned to flee immediately. They all took off in haste, running from King Herod’s sword, just in the nick of time. Why didn’t the same God who led them by a supernatural star, protect them by a supernatural lightning bolt to those trying to hurt them? It is because God’s ways are beyond our understanding, but they are always good. This is because God is good. In him there is light and no darkness. Let’s look at AN UNEXPLAINABLE DAY:

I. A STAR GUIDED THE WISE MEN TO THE HOUSE

Matthew 2:10-11a When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house,

GPS: These Wise Men had a supernatural GPS. It not only guided them to Israel but it also brought them Bethlehem, right to the very house where Jesus was staying. This brought them great joy because they had no idea where they would find the “King of the Jews.” The wise men experienced this guidance because they were willing to step out in faith and follow the star. I would guess that other Magi saw the star also, but they were unwilling to step out into the unknown and follow it. There is a real faith lesson in this point, isn’t there?

FLY: I think of the many times we have driven vanloads of youth to the AFLC summer youth conference in Estes Park, Colorado. One year the bus lost its air conditioning and became a steam bath on wheels. Other

years it seemed that the roads across barren Kansas or Nebraska would never end. But when we finally arrived in the stunningly beautiful Estes Park, the heartaches were forgotten and the trip was worth all of the fundraising, sweat and patience needed to get there. We then had a week of “heaven on earth.”

JOY: Imagine the joy the wise men felt when Mary told them the stories of the angel Gabriel, the heavenly host that proclaimed his birth to the shepherds, the holy night in the Bethlehem stable and all the miracles of this supernatural conception with no earthly father. Imagine the reports that they brought back east to their home lands where the oldest Christian fellowship of antiquity still exist in Iran and Iraq. Imagine the stories we can tell someday about God’s marvelous guidance in our lives. This is all because **A STAR GUIDED THEM TO THE HOUSE**. Also:

II. MARY & JESUS WERE THERE: JOSEPH IS NOT MENTIONED

Matthew 2:11b they saw the child with his mother Mary,

UNMENTIONED: It is not a major point, but I did notice that Joseph is not mentioned when the wise men came to the house. It doesn’t mean he was not there for sure. But it appears that they may have come early in the morning, guided by the star. It is likely that God had already spoken to them in a dream the night before about how to leave without encountering the deranged King Herod. I would suspect that when they got to the house, Joseph, was already at work, supporting his family. After Jesus was age 12, Joseph is barely ever mentioned and some people speculate that he probably died at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Our part in God’s plan of the ages might not be so glamorous or popular, but like Joseph, it is still important.

FOCUS: The focus at this point is on the child. How old was he? We don’t know, we can only guess from the age of the boys that Herod killed in Bethlehem. He was anywhere from newborn to two years old...still a baby and not quite a toddler. Yet he was and is the King of the Jews...the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The profound ancient Christmas carol called “This Little Babe” puts it this way, “*This little babe, so few days old, has come to rifle Satan’s fold, All hell doth at his presence quake, Though He himself for cold do shake, For in this weak unarmed wise, the gates of Hell he will surprise.*”

HEROD: The gates of hell certainly were shaking at that moment as Satan’s King Herod was preparing to kill the baby who threatened his reign of terror. Herod and the world may hold the reigns of wealth and power now, but in the great day of judgement, I want to be a child of God through faith in Jesus...don’t you?

III. THE WISE MEN BOWED DOWN TO WORSHIP THE CHILD AND PRESENT HIM GIFTS

Matthew 2:11c and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

PROVISION: The reason I mentioned why Joseph is not mentioned when the wise men came to the house was likely that he was up at the crack of dawn to go to work to support his family. Little did he know that in a few hours they would be fleeing to Egypt for their lives. Where would they get money for food and supplies? Yet God supplied gold, frankincense and myrrh. Once Joseph found out that they had to flee to Egypt on the spot, the supply of God was already there.

DICOTOMY: Here again we see the strange ways of God. They have to run for their lives but God provides what they need to make it happen. The story of my life is worrying about the future and then getting to the future and seeing God supply our needs perfectly. In 2007 circumstances forced us to sell our house at a great loss. We had to move, due to my cancer and health issues. After we sold our house we still owed \$20,000. But

a banker friend of mine helped me borrow a down payment for our home loan in Ohio. Seven years later we sold the Ohio house for enough money to pay everyone back and have a down payment for our home here. It looked hopeless. But God made it happen. We didn't have Magi come with gifts but had strength and we got work. Sharon was able to handle several house-cleaning jobs. Our children worked. And we had a lot of funerals, a strange but real provision for a minister! I found a flute at a garage sale for Rebekah for only \$5! When God says in *Philippians 4:19* "**He will provide for all our needs,**" He means it.

TIMING: God provided for Joseph, Mary and Jesus in their hour of need, in a special way. God will do that for us too. I am now old enough to know that is true. I have experienced it. But I still fight with worry about the future sometimes. Does anyone else struggle with that? I would guess many do.

V. EVERYONE FLED FOR THEIR LIVES

Matthew 2:12-15 **And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. 13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod.**

FLEE: Here comes the tough part of the story. That very night everyone had to flee for their lives. Herod was enraged and sent soldiers to kill all the little boys in Bethlehem. God spoke to Joseph and told him to "Get up" so we can see they had to pack and flee that VERY NIGHT before Herod's troops stormed their house.

WAIT: Mary and Joseph had to stay in Egypt until King Herod died. This brings us to the topic of some of the strange turns the life of a believer can take. It is important that none of this took God by surprise because hundreds of years earlier, God inspired the prophet Hosea to tell us about this. Hosea prophecies in Hosea 11:1, "**...out of Egypt I called my son.**" This takes us right back to the introduction of this message where I presented scripture that should help us in our understanding of this situation and of our lives. Isaiah 55:8&9 "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."**

PERSONAL: Perhaps life has taken a turn for you that you did not expect. Maybe you have to sell your home because of serious health problem. Perhaps you are losing your job because of the NEW VACCINE MANDATES. You feel like King Herod is after you to destroy you so you have to move somewhere safe but there is no safe place to move. Here is an old saying, "The safest place to be is in the center of the will of God." For baby Jesus it was fleeing to Egypt, 33 years later it was standing before Pontius Pilate being sentenced to death on the cross. Today He is at the right hand of the Father and coming back to rule and reign forever. The ways of God are not easily explainable, but they are good. Jesus wants to take our hand and lead us home, no matter how difficult the path may be at times. He was born to die for you and me. We can trust Him. We can't always understand him but, WE CAN TRUST HIM. Amen

"And now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen"

HYMN #54: "O How Beautiful the Sky"

LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION & HYMN #20 "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (Stand)

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson