

Just a note: this sermon was given as a dialogue, with the italic text done by the interviewer, and the normal text from the Prophet Isaiah. The bold italic texts are quotes from Scripture.

*This Sunday, we celebrate Epiphany, when the Magi brought their gifts to Jesus. Though we have the account in Matthew’s Gospel, much of what we picture about the story comes from tradition, not from Scripture. For example, Matthew doesn’t say how many Magi there were; we picture 3 of them from the gifts they brought - gold, frankincense and myrrh. We sing “We Three Kings,” but the word “Magi” itself means wise man. Many times we picture the Wisemen coming into the stable with the star shining brightly above it and laying their gifts at the manger. But Scripture paints a slightly different story....**On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.** By the time the Wisemen arrived, the Holy Family was in a house...some scholars say that it may have been up to 2 years after Jesus’ birth before the Wisemen finally arrived. (Isaiah Enters)*

Wait! Is that the Prophet Isaiah? I didn’t think we’d see you after the Advent season! What are you doing here?

I’m doing what all prophets do - going where God calls and bringing His word.

That brings up a question I’ve had: did you know any other prophets in your day?

It’s more that I knew of them. Hosea, Amos, Micah and Jonah all prophesied during the years that God brought his messages to me. The message God revealed to us was often the same: that God remained faithful, even when God’s people were not. Hosea went as far as marrying a wanton harlot, which portrayed God’s faithfulness to a wayward nation. God’s desire was that his people turn back to him, and forsake their wicked ways. It was the prophet Micah that shared, “***He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?***”

Micah might have recognized best the coming of the Messiah, much like I did. His prophesy: “***But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the***

clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

The Wise Men we are talking about today must not have known of other prophets. Otherwise, they wouldn't have stopped in Jerusalem to ask where the child was born.

They might not have known of Micah, but my guess would be they knew of some other prophets. Perhaps one from their own history, like Baalam, who tried and failed to curse the Hebrews when they entered the Promised Land. He had the prophecy that a star will come out of Jacob; a scepter, a ruler, will rise out of Israel.

God would speak to foreign prophets?

God speaks to everyone; otherwise, no one would be here today. God will often speak directly, through God's Spirit. God can and will speak through others, through their insights and life experience. And God even speaks through nature, the world around us. My guess would be that the "Wise Men" that you speak of were stargazers, and looked to find that star out of Jacob.

That's exactly what happened. They saw the star when it rose in the East, and followed it all the way to where the Child was. I'm sorry, Isaiah. God called you here for a reason. What message do you bring?

I've come to talk about the fulfillment of prophecy God gave me. God revealed that nations would come to God's light displayed in the Messiah, kings being drawn to His radiance. What were the words? ***Countless camels will cover your land, young camels from Midian and Ephah. They will all come from Sheba, carrying gold and incense, proclaiming the Lord's praises.***

Again, that's what happened with the Wisemen, with the "Kings"; they came from foreign lands, bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh.

So tell me: why do you think these wise men came on their long journey?

Well, some say they expected an earthly king, and came to pay their respects.

Others think since they saw such a sign in the sky, they came out of curiosity, seeking new wisdom. But according to Matthew, the wisemen said that they came to worship him.

Exactly. When people come to worship the Child, the Messiah, the Savior, it's often because they feel like something is missing, the God-shaped hole in all of our lives. Others will come because they recognize they aren't following the right path, when the path they need to follow is the one to God. When they find what they are looking for, when they find their Savior and Lord, worship comes naturally. But at the core, all of them, all of us, are answering God's call to return to him.

We see that acted out in the life of Jesus. He called his disciples to follow him. He continues to call us closer to God. It's like the Apostle Paul writes: In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

It is through the Messiah that we can come to God, and all will come to God. Those Wisemen who came to find the Christ Child were only a glimpse, a foretaste of the completion of my prophecy, of God's ultimate will and rule. God gave me these words to speak with his voice: ***“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’” All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him.***

The Apostle Paul saw that those words of prophesy were meant for Jesus. So he wrote that God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Do you hear the words there: Every knee, Every tongue? My prophecy was that all who have raged against him will come, all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance. When the Messiah returns as the ruler of God's everlasting Kingdom, he will be proclaimed as King of King and Lord of Lords, by those who are saved and those who are lost. Everyone will come face-to-face with him.

It sounds to me that if we are wise, we will seek Jesus as Lord and Savior, and find our deliverance from sin and death and our place in God's Kingdom.

That is good wisdom indeed - wisdom from God.

And what should those of us who confess Jesus as Lord do in the meantime, before he returns?

Following Micah's words would be good: to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. But I'd also think about God's plan: that through the Good News of God's Love shown in the coming of the Messiah, all nations might come together as one body, sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. God's children, God's heirs, would be the ones to display that love, so God's glory would be seen in them.

Will we see you again, Isaiah?

Only if God wills. Farewell, and Blessings.