A Good King Cares For All His Subjects
The Epiphany Of The Lord - 2017

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In ancient Israel a King was judged by how he cared for his subjects - all of them, especially the least in the kingdom. This concept arose out of how God was seen - a God who cared for all his children and for all creation. This is the theme I see running through all of our readings on this feast of the Epiphany. The very word, epiphany, is defined as the sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature of something though an event - an intuitive grasp of reality through a simple or striking event, in this case, the birth of Jesus, Emanuel. This revelation brings us to the understanding that God is for everyone, without exception.

However, not everyone will recognize this Child-King in the same way. The magi will come to do Him homage, but how do they see this event and the star that leads them to this child, and who were these magi? The magi are defined as those who "pray in silence" and are believed to be decedents of Seth, third son of Adam. These monk-like mystics from a far-off, mythical land called Shir (China?), were guardians of an age-old prophecy, that a star of indescribable brightness would herald the birth of God in human form. They clearly recognize this new King, but when they return to the homeland do they lead others to the truth they have come to believe? We don't know, the scriptures are silent on this point.

Herod also seems to recognize that this child would become king, but rather than accept the prophesy of the magi or the understanding of the Jewish priests, Herod sees the child as a threat to his own kingship. Many are amazed at these events and come to see the child and...
share their amazement, but we don't hear any more from them in the scriptures. Does this event change their lives, do they choose to live their lives differently, or do they just go back to their lives as usual?

The greatest impact appears to be on the immediate family of Jesus, on Mary and Joseph. Mary ponders these events in her heart and Joseph dreams dreams of an angelic messenger. Driven by Herod's hatred and jealousy, and directed by the God's angel, the these parents and their child flees into Egypt. We don't hear too much more about this Child-King until he advances in wisdom and age and favor before God and man. (Luke 2:52) What we do know is that he became a man who cared for those who were sick, rejected and despised. He loved them and healed them and forgave them of their sins. This won him many friends, especially among the common folk. Sadly, many did not accept his love or the truth he shared, especially those in power. The truth He shared was that God loved all his children, especially those who were the littlest and the least - just like the good kings of old.

The crowds who followed him began to trust his message of love and their numbers grew to the tens-of-thousands. Those in power began to fear him. They were afraid that they would lose control of their subjects who allegiance was based in fear. The one thing they thought would stop this revolution of love, was to eliminate its radical leader. If they could kill the shepherd, the sheep would scatter. So like Herod, who sought to kill Him at the beginning of His life, the Roman overlords and the religious leaders conspired to kill Him.

The question that remains for us today is, "Where these despotic leaders right?" By killing Jesus, did they end his message of love and forestall His Kingdom? Did the people who believe in Jesus' message continue to embrace his teaching after his execution? Will the Kingdom he came to proclaim been established on Earth, as it is in Heaven? Are we doing His will on Earth? Jesus told his followers that the Kingdom of God is Now! ... and the Kingdom of God is within us. Do we believe this? Are we ready to do more that to pay only lip service to these beliefs? God's Kingdom will come, that is our belief, but when? Are we ready to live like we believe it? Jesus came and showed us what this looks like. He loved everyone and commanded us to do the same - even those we call enemies and sinners. Are we ready to follow this Son of Man, Son of God? Today?