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Worship and Discipleship by Margo Geesing

“Epiphany and Beyond”

We hear from three of our four Gospel writers this month. John’s Gospel begins with one of the most quoted verses, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”, but he does not address anything about Jesus’s early life. In the Gospel of Matthew, we get some details of Joseph’s role in caring for Mary and Jesus and protecting them. There is just a paragraph in the Gospel of Mark referring to John the Baptist announcing the coming of the Christ and then Mark jumps to Jesus’s baptism. Luke includes a few more details of Jesus’s youth. It is in the combination of these Gospels that we get a small idea of who Jesus, before he began preaching, was. Interestingly, only two of the Synoptic Gospels include Jesus’s genealogy. Matthew does it at the beginning of the Gospel and Luke does it at Jesus’s baptism.

January 5, 2025 – *Epiphany of Our Lord* [actual: January 6th]

The Gospel Lesson is from Matthew chapter 2 verses 1-12

We hear the story of the Magi coming to worship Jesus in this Gospel. It is the presentation of Jesus to the Gentile world. The Magi bring gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. Traditionally, we look at these gifts as declarations of Jesus’s Divinity, Kingship, and the Suffering Servant / his death. Frankincense was a perfume used in smoke as a gift to God, gold is worldly riches that was given to kings, myrrh was an antiseptic ointment that was often used for burial purposes. But it is not just about the Magi. It is also about Herod. It is about Herod’s fear and need to hold onto power. Herod is afraid of the potential of a new-born baby. He is so afraid that he lies to the Magi about wanting to worship this baby. Herod is so afraid that he commands his soldiers to kill every Jewish boy child from new-born to two years old in Bethlehem. So, while we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the gifts of the Magi, we are also reminded that there is also pain and suffering in the story of who Jesus was when he walked the earth. There is pain and suffering as we follow in Jesus’s footsteps in our own journey of faith.

January 12, 2025 – *Baptism of Our Lord*

The Gospel Lesson is from Luke chapter 3 verses 15-17, 21-22

A couple of my own thoughts after reading Luke’s Gospel of Jesus’s baptism. First, John’s account of what the Messiah was coming to do sounds a bit scary. Do we really want our Messiah / Savior to be coming with fire? Ready to cast things into unquenchable fire? I wonder about John’s reaction to Jesus because nothing is said about it. Jesus is his cousin; how can Jesus be coming as the Messiah? Is it in the back of John’s mind all the shenanigan they had gotten up to when they were younger? I also wonder if just Jesus heard the voice of the Father and saw the Dove of the Holy Spirit at his baptism? Because, no one else is noted to have reacted. Did Luke get the story from Jesus? One would think, if all these people who

were looking for the Messiah and asking John if he was the Messiah and they heard this voice from heaven declaring Jesus as “*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*” wouldn’t that have made Jesus’s life a little easier to get people to believe in him?

January 19, 2025 – *Second Sunday after Epiphany*

The Gospel Lesson is from John chapter 2 verses 1-11

The third Sunday of January we get the story of the Wedding at Cana. This is a Mary moment of “momma”. I’m a mom. And a grandma to two little girls and soon, two little boys. I look at my son, whose nickname from his friends is “Bear”, who is around 6’6” and pretty big. Dan [although born and raised in California] was raised in a very southern style. He learned his “yes, ma’am’s” and “no, sir’s”, he was an Eagle Scout. But I recognize that “momma” moment of Mary’s. All she expected was for Jesus to do as he was “volun-told”. She tells Jesus about the problem, (they are out of wine) and his “sassy” response, “Woman, why do you involve me?” Note her answer: nothing to him. She just turns to the servants and tells them, “Do whatever he tells you.” And walks away! Jesus is now stuck. She remembers that 12-year-old boy and is giving him some of his own back. Jesus turns water into wine. This is his first miracle. This is his revelation of himself in wine at a common wedding. This is where, although in his mind it was not his time, he fully demonstrated his perfect obedience to his mother, as a human son. He continues in his perfect obedience to his Father, as His Divine Son even to death.

January 26, 2025 – *Third Sunday after Epiphany*

The Gospel Lesson is from Luke chapter 4 verses 14-21

The last Sunday of January Jesus is back in his home town. Here Jesus returns to Nazareth and reads from prophet Isaiah in the synagogue. A common happening in their worship. What is not so common is for the reader to sit down and say, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus proclaims himself as being anointed by God “to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” As we continue on the journey through Jesus’s life in the various Gospels, we find these prophecies are actually fulfilled in his life on earth. Even now, how would we react if someone did this in our own assembly? Especially if it was someone we have known for a long time? Would we believe or would we react like those in Nazareth, and drive them out? Would we be in fear of God’s retribution for allowing someone to say this and get away with it? Remember, the Jewish people are under Roman rule. They have lived through various captivities when God has chastised them before. Try as we might, it is difficult to listen to someone say astounding things and just let it pass; especially if we have known the person for a long time. These people have watched Jesus grow up. They probably remember Jesus wandering off when he was 12 and causing his parents worry. They probably remember Jesus and his cousin John running around town as kids. They surely remember Jesus working in Joseph’s carpenter shop. We don’t expect this kind of behavior from some kid we watched grow up. We know we are special enough to have this happen to us in our lives. But we need to remember we are special enough. God chose to create you just as you are. God loves you unconditionally, just as you are. Jesus died for you so you could hear and believe the Good News.