

JANUARY 4, 2020-SUMMARY SERMON-JOHN TSCHUDY

SCRIPTURE LESSON JEREMIAH 31:7-14, EPHESIANS 1:3-14, MATTHEW 2:1-12

This year the first Sunday of the year is the Sunday of Epiphany. During the Epiphany Season we celebrate Jesus being recognized as being the one sent by God-the Messiah. In fulfillment of Jeremiah, Jesus is sent into the world to bring the people of God together to “Save them” and unite them as the people of God. But it isn’t just the people of Israel. Rather, Jeremiah says that God is reaching out to the “Nations” and calling them to come together as the new nation of Israel. God will again have them rejoice in God’s love. Yes, originally this prophecy was directed at the Jews who left Israel. But the church also believed it was speaking of the Messiah who was to come.

In Ephesians Paul says that God has destined us for adoption into the family of God. Paul is writing to more than Jewish Christians. He is writing to all of us Gentiles, that we too are to be included in God’s family of salvation and love. Through Jesus Christ God is offering us forgiveness and salvation because of God’s love for us. With all of this comes the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth of God and all that goes with it. This is the promise of God made to those willing to follow his lead in our lives.

The story of the Epiphany Season always begins with the visit of the Wise Men, their meeting with Herod and their learning that again in accordance of the prophets the Messiah is born in the royal city of Bethlehem. The Magi leave and find the child with his parents and worshipping him give him three gifts and thus we assume that there were three of them. But according to scripture we don’t know how many there were because Matthew doesn’t tell us. The tradition of the “Three Wise Men” can be traced to non-biblical sources at a much later date. What he does tell us is that they were from what we call Iran in the modern day. Magi were scientist/priest who studied the stars and would then be among the first to recognize even a small change in the night sky. They would also interpret it from a divine perspective.

It is important to recognize that these people, whomever they were, are not Jews or Greeks/Romans. Rather they are from another group and are still invited by God to come together to give praise to God’s chosen one and worship him. Again according to the prophets God is inviting other people to come and worship God’s son. Herod wants them to return to him to tell him where exactly the child is but God reveals to them that Herod’s interest in the child is not to worship him. Which leads back to the events of last week.

But for this week the important thing we need together is that God is calling all people to worship Christ and receive the blessings of God that come with Christ’s love and forgiveness. On this first weekend of the New Year it is important for us to recognize that God invites all people to be a part of God’s family. That means that no matter where we are or what we are or what other people say, we are all included in God’s family and the gifts that come with it. Further it means we are to reach out so that all people are included, no matter who they are. We are to make sure they are all included and that should be part of our effort as individual Christians and as congregations in this year to come.