

Dear Friends,

Matthew 2: 9-12

The magi are nearly at their destination. The star is ahead of them. Eventually it stops over the place where Jesus is. Their arrival fills the magi with overwhelming joy. Last time we looked ahead to the suffering that Herod unleashed when he ordered the massacre of the children of Bethlehem. We saw that the Christmas story reflects the real world including its horror. The world however is not only a place of horror, it is also a place of overwhelming joy. We take seriously the evil, but we also make sure to take delight in the wonders of life.

The magi enter the house where they see Jesus with Mary. They kneel down and pay homage to him. They open their treasure chests and offer their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Their worship and their gifts are tokens of their opening of themselves to Jesus. They make room for him. They place themselves in his hands. They say "yes" to him. You are called to open yourself to God; to make of yourself a stable in which there is room for God; to make of your heart a manger where Jesus may be laid. You are called to give God your consent. God wants to be born again in you, for the eternal word of God to become flesh once more in you. But God's presence is not forced on you. You have freedom to choose. God waits for you to say "yes".

As the magi open themselves to Jesus, so Jesus opens himself to the magi. He makes room for them. There is space for them with him. We've noticed that the magi were considered to be mysterious and sinister. People were afraid of them and condemned them. Jesus however, is open to them. Here's another example of how with Jesus there is no us and them, none are outcasts to him. Jesus will go on being open to others, including those who were condemned and written off as being no good. We are invited to be Christlike in our attitudes, to be of the same mind as him. We are therefore called to be like him in being open to people in their diversity and with all their differences.

And as Jesus is open to others, so, he is open to you. We're all a bit misshapen. We're all at least a little bit messed up. Some of us sometimes feel as though we are quite a lot messed up. Don't be afraid. Jesus is open to you, warts and all. There is nothing you can do to make God love you more. There is nothing you can do to make God love you less. Jesus accepts you just as you are.

So then, this story faces the reality of the world which contains both horror and wonder. It shows us the openness of the magi to Jesus and the openness of Jesus to the magi.

And the magi left for their own country. As Christmas comes to an end for another year, you return to your own country, to the stuff that makes up your life. But the magi were changed. May you too be transformed as God continues to heal, renew and strengthen you that you may be equipped for this new year and all it will bring.

God bless you,

Tony