

The Wise Men and Christmas



A Christmas pageant is being presented by the children of the Junior Department. In the center of the star-lighted chancel is a small crib from which some ends of straw protrude. Mary sits behind the crib gazing into it, while Joseph stands protectingly at her shoulder. At one side kneel several young shepherds holding upraised crooks. Down the candle-lighted aisle come three richly dressed figures bearing gifts and singing, "We three kings of orient are." They kneel before the crib and reverently offer their gifts.

Such scenes are common at Christmas and no doubt help those who take part by making the story of Jesus' birth live in their memories. But did the wise men and shepherds kneel together at the manger? Were the wise men there that first Christmas day?

All we know about the wise men is recorded in Matthew's Gospel. There we read that they were men who lived to the east of Jerusalem. They had noticed a peculiar star in the heavens and believed it meant that a king of

the Jews had been born. So they set out to worship this new-born king and came to King Herod to ask for help in finding the child. His chief priests directed the wise men to Bethlehem of Judea where they found the child and presented to him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then they went home without reporting to Herod that they had found the child. That is all we know about them.

Matthew does not say how many wise men there were. Tradition says there were three, probably because of the three types of gifts. Matthew mentions no camels, although it is safe to assume that such beasts were used. The Gospel says nothing about the wise men being kings, but calls them magi, or astrologers. The whole story seems to imply that they did not present their gifts to Jesus until some time after his birth. If the star had not appeared until his birth, then their visit must have been weeks or even months later. The fact that Herod ordered all children of Bethlehem "two years old or under" to be killed, leads many scholars to believe that the visit of the wise men was as much as a year or more after the birth of Jesus.

For these and other reasons the church has not associated the wise men with Christmas in its plan for the church year, but with the Epiphany season which follows. Epiphany means "manifestation" and the season celebrates the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. The wise men were the first Gentiles to pay homage to Christ, and, in a way, are the forerunners of most of us who believe in Christ. May all men come to Christ as willingly and as quickly as did the wise men!



The Epiphany of Our Lord : January 6, 1963

Art by Johanna Sperr

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Andrew Johnson Highway
Morristown, Tennessee

The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6, 1963

THE SERVICE - 10:30 A.M.

Prelude
Hymn -416 "When Morning Gilds the Skies"
The Service p. 15
.....
Introit p. 80
Gloria Patri p. 17
Kyrie p. 18
Gloria in Excelsis pp. 20-21
.....
Old Testament Lesson Isaiah 60:1-6
Epistle Lesson Colossians 1:23-27
Alleluia p. 24
Gospel Lesson Matthew 2:1-12
The Apostles' Creed p. 5
Hymn-213 "Behold us, Lord"
Sermon - "What is the Goal?"
Seminarian A. Byron Holderby, Jr.
.....
Offering
Offertory p. 27
Prayer and Lord's Prayer
Benediction p. 40 Doxology
Hymn- 434 "Beautiful Savior"
Silent Prayer
Postlude

Enter the church to worship ;
depart to serve.

THE CHURCH SCHOOL - 9:30 A.M.

Ralph Beier - Supt. Telephone 586-6373

Come and join us in the study of God's Word.
Bring your children with you. Classes for all
ages.

Seminarian A. Byron Holderby, Jr. is conducting
our service today. He is a student at Lutheran
Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C.
and his home is Norfolk, Va. We are happy to
have him with us today and we are grateful for
his service to God.

Next Sunday Evening - The Lutheran Church Women
will meet at the church. All Women of the
congregation are invited to attend this meeting.

The Church Council will meet Monday, January 14
for the election of officers and for an import-
ant business conference.

Choir Practice - Wednesday - 7:30 P.M.

We welcome all who visit with us today and
invite you to all services and activities of
the congregation. Please sign our guest
register.

Pianist	-	Carolynn Beier
Acolyte	-	Robert Cahmen
Ushers	-	John Schwrig John Cahmen