

January 6th Devotion from Pastor Jon

January 6th, at least in church circles, is Epiphany. In the news cycle today, January 6th represents the one-year anniversary of the attack on the Capitol in Washington D.C. Both have to do with threats to institutions and power. In Washington D.C. an election and democracy were under fire on January 6th. In the Holy Land, King Herod felt threatened by a newborn king born in a manger.

Epiphany in the church is the end of the Christmas season and it is the traditional day we celebrate the magi coming from the east to pay homage to the Christ child... bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:1-12). Gold represented kingship, frankincense represented divinity, and myrrh was used to anoint people at burials. The magi's visit revealed that Jesus was for the whole world. Strangers, non-Jews, Gentiles, came from a land far away in the east to see the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. This story is about the inclusiveness of Jesus' birth as "Good news of great joy for all people."

King Herod abused his power and ruled with fear. He secretly employed the magi to return to him once they found the Christ child so he could come and pay him "homage". But we know from the context that Herod wanted Jesus taken out. The magi followed the star and found Jesus. They were overwhelmed with joy and gave their best gifts. Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

When the magi encountered the Christ child, they were changed forever. They knew where true power resided... in Jesus. Frederick Buechner in his devotion, "Listening to Your Life" writes on January 6th, "Herod was fit to be tied when he realized he'd been had and ordered the murder of every male child two years old and under in the district. For all his (Herod's) enormous power, he know there was somebody in diapers more powerful still."

Questions for reflection:

What does true power look like to you?

What are your best gifts that you bring to the table and can share with the Church/world?

How are you changed when you encounter Jesus Christ? Does it make you want to take another road?

Epiphany Blessings,

Pastor Jon