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## “The Story and the Glory”

BY PASTOR JOHN HILLMER

We all know the story, oh so well. “The 3 Kings travel from afar”. Although we really don’t know that they were “kings” - Scripture never says that. We really don’t know that there were “three” - Scripture never says that. We picture them traveling on camels - Scripture never says that.

They travel guided by a star and the star leads them to Jerusalem. Herod is terrified because this could be a threat to his power and his administration. Which only shows how insecure Herod was. For this “King Jesus” didn’t have the least bit of interest in that kind of power.

We all know the story, oh so well. “We 3 Kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar.” Gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. We know the story oh so well. Or DO we? The glory of the story. But the “glory” is not the “Gold”, or the Incense, or the Myrrh. The “Glory” is a “Mystery! This is what the Apostle Paul says. A marvelous, glorious “Mystery”.

**The Story and the Glory are interpreted to us in Ephesians:** One of the guiding principles – “Tools” if you will – for how to read Scripture, is that “Scripture interprets Scripture”. Thank you Martin. We never take a beloved passage, or a favorite phrase, beautiful as it might be, yank it out of its setting and put it up on the marquis as immutable wisdom unto itself (there is no – context). The over-arching narrative of Scripture itself, sheds light on Scripture.

**The Story and the Glory are interpreted to us in Ephesians:**

*“...for surely you know that God’s Grace was given to me for YOU; and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation.*

## **and Epiphany:**

*In former generations, this mystery was not made known to humankind, but it has now been revealed by the Spirit and the mystery is this: That the Gentiles have become members of the same body, fellow heirs, and sharers in the same promise.*

*God's Grace was given to me to bring to the gentiles the news (glory) of the boundless riches of Christ. To make everyone see the mystery hidden for ages, in God who created all things; so that through the church, the wisdom of God might be made known to all nations."*

From the Beginning God wanted the whole world to be held in unity; in love and harmony. That's how God created the world. And then when things 'went south', and the world became a fractured place – darkened by devious attraction of "sin" – God AGAIN still wanted to love the whole world and shower His Grace upon all. God DID love the world!

*"For God so LOVED the world – that He gave his only begotten One. That whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.*

*Indeed – God did not send the Son into the world to CONDEMN...but in order that the world might be SAVED...through him."*

From the Beginning God chose a people, and gave them express purpose, to announce and embody God's "Covenant of Blessing" to all the Chosen People, the Children of Israel, beginning with Abraham. Then God sent his only begotten Son, to proclaim and embody God's Love for all. Then God formed and commissioned the "church", to proclaim and announce and carry forth God's Grace to all nations...

Time and time again, things fall short. When will we get the picture??!! That God's Love is for ALL!!!

The collective "we" of humanity keeps saying, "Well, it's for me!" I'm not sure about ALL. "It's for us, and our people; not for them, and those people." So one more time, God acts.

God chose a star, to lead the discerning; the Magi; the "Wise Men from afar", so that Nations, all people of Earth – could come to know God's Grace! The Promise of Blessing, Fullness, and Love. Embodied in Jesus. Such a gift!

Let's consider "gifts". Of the 3 mentioned, the third is the most unusual. Why Myrrh? Myrrh a peculiar gift for a birth, for it was itself also a reminder of death. Myrrh - a

precious burial spice to mark a death which was also most precious to us. It also brought life to us for this, too is an integral part of the Christmas story and, really & truly, when all is said and done, it is the most important part.

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his then we will most certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his”.

This was the last for which the first was made “Christ was born for this” the Christmas carol goes. (“what child is this?” V#2 “the cross be borne for me, for you…”)

So, it is essential for us to remember as we leave now the remnants of our Christmas season behind us again and return instead to the crazy schedules of our day-to-day lives, that we should remember that this light that still shines on all people, on all nations, and that God is being revealed still.

The journey before us is still walked in star-light that sometimes it seems so dark but the light is still there. And even if we do get lost every now and again, we need to remember that there are limits to human wisdom. That our God knows this better than we do – God knows God does not expect us to accomplish this journey alone and certainly not unscathed. That’s why we have one another. That is what friendship, community, and KOINONIA is all about.

What matters is that we continue the journey and that we use our gifts. Open our gifts, and as the magi could probably tell you, once you’ve opened your gifts, our life will take a different road.

Richest Blessings on your New Year’s Journey!

Amen.