



Of Water and Spirit

Mark 1:4–11/1:3–9 IV

*And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness,
preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

January 11, 2015

Thought For The Week

Scriptures

Isaiah 60: 1-6 • Ephesians 2: 3-a, 5,6 • Matthew 2: 1-12



As I reflect on my life in this year 2015, there is one small bit of history that I wish I could retrieve, at least remember the scene, but there is not much promise that it will ever happen. My one great longing is to know exactly, where I was born. I am fairly certain it was in Crittenden hospital in Detroit as it was designated as a “Woman’s Hospital”. I am also quite certain that it was situated quite differently than it was the last time I was there. For when I was there, it was virtually on top of the John Lodge Freeway. They had to construct a giant wall of concrete to hold up the layers of Earth that they cut into while constructing that portion of the roadway. (Yes, I was born before the John Lodge Freeway was built.)

Now, knowing that is all well and good, but I still would like to have seen the very room where I was born and where I saw daylight for the first time. Sadly, that will never happen. The old hospital has since been razed (torn down) and a new one built in its place. This is not really a bad thing, after all, science must progress and facilities must progress with the science.

I am reflecting on all this as I re-read the scriptures for the feast of the Epiphany, a word that means “to shine forth, to become gloriously visible. The story (and it is a story) informs us that some wisdom seekers from the East, that land of light, sought to make their way to the East, the land of darkness. Fortunately, they did not need the assistance of a Global Positioning Instrument.

The story relates that a star guided them from East to West. They were on their way to discover where a king was said to be born. It turned out to be (according to ancient prophecy), not in a palace but in a dirt hut in the ramshackle village of Bethlehem of Judea. Having arrived there, they found not a king as they had been promised but a child, one who, as it was later predicted by Christian writers would be the light of the world, and so it turned out to be...Christ, son of Mary, Light and Savior of the world.

Returning for a moment to my own story of longing to come back to my birthplace, it appears to me as I reflect on my life that, like, the wise men from the East, I too have been guided by the light of a star, undeniably islands of light. Among those stars, I would count my mother and father who instilled in me

the light of the Christian faith. To them I would add my many mentors but especially Ralph Heaviland, who helped me understand, as best he could, the essence of our faith. Later, as I was called be a Priest and then an Elder, I had the tutelage of good Elders and High Priests that resided throughout our Detroit Metropolitan Area.

I have also learned considerably from my peers as I grew in the church, people like Dave Teeple in our many years of friendship and sports, Clark Smith also has always been an inspiration especially in his role as Camp Director and Ed & Pat Clapham with their steadfast devotion to their Heavenly Father in all aspects of their ministry. Also, people like Murray Smith, Roger Gault, Al Barr, Bruce Brown, George Booth (Uncle George). Well, there have been so many, and I am sure I left out quite a few. Suffice it to say, without these people "keeping me in line", who knows where I would be now.

And, believe it or not, this personal story takes me back to the story of the Magi, the wise men from the East. For them it was a life-story, a life-journey, and a voyage of hope from darkness to light, from the unknown to the known, from reality to mystery. Dare we say then that all of us are so-called desert travelers, individuals moving from darkness to light, sojourners during our entire life, searching always with the help of the light of others for that homeland that we have always so dearly longed for?

Even though it would be nice to see where I was born, I am sure that it would probably be just another mint-green room with bright lights and stainless steel furniture with people hustling around doing their part for the birth of the next infant. Who knows, maybe we can see the "replay" in Heaven.

Stewardship Thought For The Week

Think about this:

Generosity with strings is not generosity. It's a deal.

I Have My Mission

*"God has created me to do Him some definite service;
He has committed some work to me,
which He has not committed to another.*

*I have my mission — I never may know it in this life,
but I shall be told it in the next.*

*Somehow I am necessary for His purposes,
as necessary in my place as an Archangel in His —
if, indeed, I fail, He can raise another,
as He could make the stones, children of Abraham.*

*Yet I have a part in this great work;
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.*

*He has not created me for naught.
I shall do good, I shall do His work;
I shall be an angel of peace,
a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it,
if I do but keep his commandments
and serve Him in my calling."*

John Henry Newman

Values

Most people think of stewardship as time, talent, and treasure. Yet there's more to stewardship than the commonly known "three T's" Underneath the time, talent, and treasure are four underlying core values: identity, trust, gratitude, and love. These are fundamental in developing the importance of time, talent, and treasure. Once we understand the four values, the three "T's" take on an ever greater importance.