

**Sermon Outline - Sun, Jan 7, 2024 – First Sunday of the Year- Vision Month**  
(Matthew 2:1-12; Proverbs 29:18)

**Intro** – Every January we thank God for bringing us into a new year and we reflect on God’s vision for our life and the world. Today is also Epiphany Sunday, a time to celebrate the coming of Christ and think about his mission in the world.

**Exegesis**

- There are those who see Christmas time as passed. Once the presents are opened, they move on → But we should not be caught up in the commercialism of Christmas
- Around the world orthodox Christians in much of Latin America, Egypt and Ethiopia, Turkey and the Philippines have begun their celebration of Epiphany.
- Epiphany celebrates two events in the Jesus story. First – the coming of the Three Kings to Bethlehem and second the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist
- Did not grow up celebrating it but I have learned to embrace this time because it can be a time for those of us who recognize the gift of Jesus to celebrate without all the fuss.
- Also growing up, under my father and mother’s church, this was always called Vision Month – a time when we asked for direction from God in the New Year.
- This year’s Vision is particularly important for me, as God has called me to leave my job as a government official to pastor full time and I am seeking God’s vision and direction – and I am trusting God to provide for us spiritually and financially as I take this step.

**Key Points – Lessons from the Wise Men**

1. They were looking for a sign from God –

They were paying attention to what God might be saying. So often we are so busy that we miss God’s vision because we are not paying attention or listening for God to speak.

2. They were willing to let go of their comfort and privilege to follow God’s sign.

When the message told them to go to a strange place – they were actually willing to go. Sometimes God gives us a sign but if we don’t like the message, we ignore the signs.

3. They placed their gifts before Jesus.

They come to childbearing the best of what they have. (Wise Women would have been more practical.) We often look for God to do something for us, not putting ourselves before God. We all have gifts and part of God’s vision is how to use those gifts for the kin(g)dom.

4. They kept listening to God and they went back a different way.

How often do we have an amazing encounter with God and then we try to retrace our steps towards where we came? Keep listening and be ready to do things differently.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Where has God been sending you signs? Where can you create space to hear God more clearly?
2. Are there signs that you have been unwilling to follow? What has been holding you back? Is there a practice, a group of people, a space to help give you the courage to step out?
3. What does it look like to walk in a different direction in 2024? How can you allow God to use your gifts differently in this new year?