



January 5 – Believe...The Road Isn't Straight

You made it! The holiday season is officially over and now you need a vacation from the holidays, right? Perhaps all you want is a bit of quiet, and an easy, simple path forward. But what if that's not what happens? What if the road ahead isn't exactly straight and easy? Then what? Can we still believe God is at work? Can we still believe God is in the midst of roads that aren't straight and easy? Join us this weekend as we let the Wise Men remind us even in the midst of chaos and long journeys – we can still believe that crooked roads still lead us into God's ways!

Scripture:

Isaiah 43:15-20 I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and King. ¹⁶ I am the Lord, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea. ¹⁷ I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses. I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned, their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick. ¹⁸ "But forget all that— it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. ¹⁹ For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. ²⁰ The wild animals in the fields will thank me, the jackals and owls, too, for giving them water in the desert. Yes, I will make rivers in the dry wasteland so my chosen people can be refreshed.

Matthew 2:1-12 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men^[a] from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ² "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,^[b] and we have come to worship him." ³ King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴ He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: ⁶ 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities^[c] of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.' " ⁷ Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!" ⁹ After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹ They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Questions:

- What has been an unexpected turn in your life that led to unexpected blessings?
- The Wise Men looked to the star to give them guidance. When you feel like you are in "foreign territory" (figuratively or for real) what are the guiding forces of hope in your life? Who do you turn to?
- Have you ever found God "scattered amongst the pebbles of the road you never planned to take"? (words by Rev Sarah Speed in the poem *Field Notes*) What happened? How did God show up?
- As you look into a new year, try choosing a word or idea to be your guide throughout the year. Something perhaps that will challenge you or remind you of God's presence in the midst of all the roads we travel. See what happens!

Reading for the Week:

Monday: James 1:17

Tuesday: Numbers 6:24-26

Wednesday: Ephesians 3:20

Thursday: Isaiah 40:31

Friday: Psalm 27:13-14