

Yesterday my good friend, Lynn, was telling me how excited she is about a class she's taking this year with Eckhart Tolle, a metaphysical teacher. Some of you have probably read some of his books. She is excited to be giving this time and energy to her spiritual journey. It made me think of the three magi who came from somewhere in the East following their spiritual dream in the form of a star. Lynn has been reading Tolle's books, she has been watching on-line videos and she's excited to get started. I wonder how long the magi had been preparing for their vision quest. (I doubt that they watched on-line videos but I'm sure they consulted ancient scrolls). I can only imagine the excitement that they felt when a new star appeared and led them to Judea, and how their excitement mounted when they discovered people in Jerusalem who were also expecting a miracle, a messiah to be born in Bethlehem.

I had a similar sense of excitement when I found that tantalizing sentence in today's reading from the Letter to the Ephesians, "that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Through the *church* the wisdom of God might be made known. That's you and me. Through *us* "the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."

That's pretty astonishing. God did not choose the powerful leaders of the world to reveal God's Son. It wasn't Herod or his courtiers who first got the news. It was foreigners - people coming across the border from another country - people who weren't even Jewish. And we know that that was probably a wise decision on God's part because once Herod learned that a baby had been born "King of the Jews" he set out to kill him; so his soldiers murdered all the boy children of two years and under

in and around Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt. They became immigrants, strangers in a strange land.

All through the Biblical narrative we see that God uses the apparently weaker, smaller or marginalized to confound the powerful. You will remember the story of David and Goliath. Goliath was a huge man, a Philistine wearing the new modern iron armor. He was goading the Israelite army, but none of them wanted to take him on. Then David showed up to bring his brothers their lunch, and it was this young boy without any armor who fought the giant and felled him with a stone to his forehead – a skill he had learned while out on the hills caring for his family flock of sheep.

For me, this one story seems to sum up the way that God works. The Messiah is born to an unwed mother in a place designed only for animals, and the birth announced to shepherds and then foreigners. And at the end of his earthly life, Jesus the Messiah stands before the most powerful man in the land, clad in very little and totally defenseless.

It doesn't make any sense.

Just as it doesn't make any sense “that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” We have a very special place in the mission of God. Our task is not just to worship God but to serve as well. We are the Body of Christ. We are the ones who are tasked with making “the wisdom of God ... known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” We are the ones who will bring the mission of God into being. Even though we are not very powerful or very significant. Even though we don't have a lot of political clout. We are the church. The David chosen to fell Goliath.

I find this seriously exciting. Because often I feel like the little bit that we can do is so small that it is useless. It is easy for me to get discouraged by the magnitude of the task before us – bringing the reign of God on earth. But somehow in God’s mind and in God’s mission, my little bit and your little bit and our little bit are what make the difference. Even though we can’t see it. So we don’t need to give up because the needs of the world are so great. We don’t need to give up because we’re not a big group of people. In fact, those are things working in our favor.

I hope that as we start this New Year you might also share a little of my excitement to see what God is going to do in our midst and through us, the people of God at St Benedict’s. We are been through the preparation of Advent and the joy of Christmas. Now we are in the season of Epiphany – of growing light when God and God’s mission are revealed to us and to the world, and it is our privilege to be active participants in the revelation of the light.

Each one of us is engaged in the mission of God to bring all things into reconciliation with the divine. Each one of us has a role to play. Even if it seems insignificant, it may be the one thing that changes everything. We sometimes say “There’s nothing we can do except pray” as if prayer is a last resort but prayer is something we can all do which makes a huge difference, since it aligns our goodwill with that of God and brings new energy to everything it touches. Sometimes miracles happen when we pray. I encourage you to consider praying every day for the planet, for the mission of St Benedict’s , and the people God lays on your heart. You might also consider joining the Prayer circle which meets on Wednesday mornings, or participating in the prayer team which receives requests throughout the week.

Prayer is an important ministry which all of us can engage in. We don’t need to know anything about the situation to pray that God’s grace and

love will be with someone, or to hold them in the light of divine love. A few days before Christmas we received an email from someone in distress. I shared it with the prayer team. On Friday I received a text, “Thank you prayers are working. Amazingly powerful.”

You will remember the famous quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” We could change that to say, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed pray-ers can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Prayer and the results of prayer are part of the way that we reveal God: part of the way that “through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known.” Never, never feel that your prayers are insignificant - they are not.

Everything we do as members of the Body of Christ has the potential to make known the wisdom of God – or not. It Is not just the big things. So let us this Epiphany set out with excitement to reveal God’s love and God’s wisdom in all that we do, wherever we are, knowing that God uses the small to change the big.