

**“A New Year, A New Beginning in the Word Made Flesh” (Matthew 2:1–12;
Ephesians 3:1–12), Sermon on January 4, 2026**

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The turning of a year always carries a certain weight. A new calendar opens before us, and with it come expectations—spoken and unspoken. We are encouraged to improve, to resolve, to do better than before. The world urges us to begin again by trying harder, planning more carefully, and controlling what lies ahead.

But Scripture does not begin the year by placing pressure on our shoulders. It starts with revelation. Not with what we promise God, but with what God reveals to us, not with human determination, but with divine direction.

As we stand at the threshold of a new year and celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, we are reminded that the most important new beginning is not the one we attempt—but the one God has already begun in Jesus Christ. Time moves forward because calendars turn. But lives are transformed because God has entered time, taken flesh, and made God’s dwelling among us.

The Epiphany tells us this story through travelers—the magi from the East—who begin their journey not with certainty but with wonder. They notice a star. A sign. A disturbance in the ordinary sky. And instead of dismissing it, they follow it.

They do not know exactly where it will lead. They do not have a detailed map.

What they have is attentiveness, patience, and trust that God is revealing something new. That is already a word for us at the beginning of this year.

The magi teach us that faith does not require complete understanding before the journey begins. Faith begins with noticing where God's light appears and choosing to move toward it—step by step, night by night, mile by mile.

Matthew tells us that these wise ones arrive in Jerusalem seeking a child born “king of the Jews.” Their question unsettles the powerful. Herod is troubled. The religious leaders are consulted. Fear and control rise quickly in the presence of God's new work. This is often how revelation is received by those who have too much invested in the old ways.

But the magi are not deterred. They continue. And when the star reappears, Matthew says they rejoice with exceedingly great joy. Revelation produces joy—not because the road is easy, but because God is faithful. The journey of the magi reminds us that waiting is not passive. Waiting is a faithful movement toward God's promise. They wait by watching the sky. They stay by walking forward. They wait, trusting that God's purposes are unfolding even when political powers resist them, and the future feels uncertain.

What a word this is for us as we enter a new year—carrying memories of hardship, unanswered prayers, grief, fear, and questions about what lies ahead. The Epiphany assures us that God is not absent from uncertainty. God’s light shines precisely there.

The magi eventually arrive not at a palace, but at a house, not before a throne of power, but before a child. And when they see him, they kneel. They offer gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—not because the child demands them, but because revelation always invites response. This is the heart of Epiphany: God is made known—not just to Israel, but to the nations. Outsiders become witnesses. Gentiles become worshipers. The promise expands.

Here, the Epiphany reading joins hands with Paul’s words in Ephesians: that in Christ, the mystery hidden for generations has been revealed—that the Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body, sharers in the promise of God. God’s new beginning is never narrow. God’s revelation continually widens the circle.

At the start of this year, that truth matters deeply. We are reminded that our identity is not rooted in fear, division, or exclusion, but in grace. God’s manifestation in Christ tells us who belongs—and the answer is broader, more generous, and more hopeful than the world dares to imagine.

The magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they go home by another way. Revelation changes direction. Encountering Christ does not simply comfort us; it reorients us. A new beginning in the Word made flesh means we cannot keep walking the same paths as before.

This is where the New Year and Epiphany meet most clearly. A new year does not promise clarity. But Epiphany promises light. A new year does not guarantee safety. But God promises presence and protection. A new year does not remove risk. But Christ reveals a way forward.

We are invited, like the magi, to step into this year with confidence—not confidence in ourselves, but confidence in the God who reveals, guides, protects, and remains faithful. The God who turned exile into homecoming in Jeremiah. The God who heals the brokenhearted and gathers the outcast in the psalms. The God who calls us chosen and beloved in Ephesians. The God who reveals himself in a child, to the nations, under a star.

And then Matthew leaves us with a quiet, powerful image. The star that guided the magi does not stay forever. It fades from the story. But the light does not disappear. It has moved—from the sky into human hearts.

The star fades. But hearts burn with new understanding. The sign in the heavens gives way to faith in daily life. So it is with us. We may not see a star lighting

every step of this year. But we carry something deeper: hearts enflamed by Christ's presence, minds awakened to God's mercy, lives redirected by divine love. We walk not by certainty, but by trust. Not by fear, but by faith. Not alone, but accompanied by the Word made flesh.

As we begin this new year, may we follow the light God gives us today. May we wait patiently for the Lord who is gracious and merciful. May we trust in God's protection amid uncertainty. May we walk with courage, knowing Christ has been revealed—for us, and for all. The star may fade. But the light remains. And our hearts, once touched by Christ, will never be the same. Amen.