

Happy New Year! Welcome the year of our Lord 2014, and on this Epiphany Sunday, when we celebrate the revelation that Jesus, the babe born in Bethlehem, is God in human flesh, the familiar story of the Magi's visit invites us to consider - what are we hoping to see in 2014? What are we looking forward to?

You see, Epiphany celebrates the dawn of God's new day when human beings began to see that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us; God is still with us. God is still showing us that the promise is true, "I am with you always to the end of the age."

Are we using the power of observation that God has given every human being to see God's new thing that is emerging all around us, or are our eyes closed? We only see what we always see. Nothing changes. Nothing matters. It's just another day, same old, same old.

The contrast I have in mind is between the Magi and the Scribes and Pharisees. The Scribes and Pharisees knew where to look. Herod asks where the Messiah was to be born, and right away they answer - Bethlehem and quote chapter and verse. They knew where to look. They knew the answer, but they did not see; they did not observe.

The Magi didn't know where to look. They invested everything in their questions. They observed the star at its rising; these men who spent their lives studying the stars searching and hoping for some sign saw their fondest wish answered. They saw the star. The king was born...somewhere over that-a-way. They risked their fortunes; they sacrificed their reputations; they went all in, because they observed the star.

What are you looking forward to in 2014? More of the same, or could this be the year God shows you something you've never seen before? Something that changes everything? Something that shows you that faith and hope are far more than refuges from the trials and travails of life; faith and hope are the only ways

to truly overcome in this life.

The Magi didn't know what they were looking for or where to look. "Where is he that is born King of the Jews, for we have observed his star at its rising and have come to worship him." What did that mean? What would they find? They didn't know; they had more questions than answers, but they had the power of observation; their eyes and their hearts were open, and God showed them His Son and they were filled with exceedingly great joy; and they worshipped him.

Where might you see Jesus this year? What could fill your heart with exceedingly great joy and inspire you to worship him "with all your heart, soul, strength and mind?" Just imagine -- what would it be like to see THAT?

Howard Thurman, who greatly influenced Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., gave us a glimpse of that experience and outlook when he wrote: "Look well to the growing edge. All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born; all around us life is dying and life is being born. The fruit ripens on the tree, the roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth against a time when there shall be new lives, fresh blossoms, green fruit. Such is the growing edge! It is the extra breath from the exhausted lung, the one more thing to try when all else has failed, the upward reach of life when weariness closes in upon all endeavor. This is the basis of hope in moments of despair, the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint and men have lost their reason, the source of confidence when worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash. The birth of the child -- life's most dramatic answer to death -- this is the growing edge incarnate. Look well to the growing edge!"

Look forward in 2014. Keep your eyes and your hearts open. "God with us" has arrived, and he has something for you to see. Don't miss it. Let your questions keep you focused on "the growing edge." God will bless you and make you a blessing like those Magi of old when you keep the faith and hold onto hope and dare to exercise your power of observation. Amen.