

Home By Another Way
Matthew 2: 1-12
Don Lincoln

Unless I'm going shopping in Kennett Square or to physical therapy, when leaving my development, I almost always turn right on Route 52. If I'm going to church, I turn right. When I'm headed to friends in Montgomery County, I turn right. Downtown West Chester, turn right. Home Depot or Costco? Turn right. Philadelphia airport? You got it – I turn right.

So imagine my confusion the other day when I was headed to Philadelphia and WAZE – W-A-Z-E – the route planning app I use when driving – told me to turn LEFT! No way!! It's NEVER left when going to Philly from my development! NEVER. So I turned right. And WAZE told me to turn around. Several times. I kept going; and eventually WAZE added about 30 minutes to my expected travel time.

Then I realized. There must be a problem. A serious problem. And there was. An accident at Route 1 and 202 had shut down my usual route to virtually anywhere I wanted to go that day. And already – nearly instantaneously – within a second of being booted up – WAZE had found me another way to my destination. I eventually submitted, turned around, and got to where I wanted to go.

Our story from Matthew has similarities. It describes the visit of the Magi from the east to the Christ child. And that last verse – “And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”

It's such a throwaway phrase – “by another road.” But I wonder. Was it an insignificant detour – or was it a really troublesome, maybe even more dangerous redirection? How many roads east were there at the time of Jesus' birth? It's not like they had interstates, or heavy equipment to build roads everywhere. Imagine if someone said to you, “Sure – you can drive to Florida. Just don't use I-95.” But there IS another way – and you could find it. It might take work, but there IS another way.

We have all had to learn new ways to do old things these last two years. Virtually everything we do has been affected, rearranged – at least to some degree. We have had to find another road to reach our destination almost every day it seems.

The Christmas story – of God coming incarnate – is about a new road being established in our midst. God's love embodied among us. God's delight living among us and within us. This is the bursting forth of God's light in our darkness, and the possibility of the birthing of God's love in our hearts. God – in infinite power and love chooses to belong to us in Jesus, so we would know we belong to God.¹ Talk about a new road!

And friends – THIS IS – HE IS – our road home. The coming of Jesus who makes all things new. Even and especially in these days of division, destruction, anxiety and chaos. The One whose way of love and grace and justice and selfless sacrifice is another way – THE new way for us and the whole world to truly get home.

Remember, the wise men followed a star announcing the King of the Jews, even while Herod was **already king**. But this king is born in a humble home, not a palace; in a small village – not the center of political might. Born among the poor and vulnerable, not the wealthy and powerful. NONE of this conformed to the usual social constructs for anything close to royalty. BUT there is no suggestion in Matthew's story the Magi questioned the legitimacy of this Child as King.²

Perhaps they were more open to new things – and thus new roads – than you and I may find ourselves in our daily lives.

All this past week, the morning devotions I received kept suggesting the possibilities of new roads. New ways of thinking. New ways of being. New ways of pondering and living and reflecting...

Read these words from poet and activist Howard Thurman:

The old song of my spirit has wearied itself out.
It has long ago been learned by heart;
It repeats itself over and over,
Bringing no added joy to my days or lift to my spirit.
I will sing a new song.
I must learn the new song for the new needs.
I must fashion new words born of all the new growth
of my life – of my mind – of my spirit.
I must prepare for new melodies that have
never been mine before,
That all that is within me may lift my voice unto God.
Therefore, I shall rejoice with each new day
And delight my spirit in each fresh unfolding.
I will sing, this day, a new song unto the Lord.³

Powerful words suggesting there is a new way available for us today. ANOTHER WAY – and it calls me all week long, with each new morning, to ponder what might the new way look like for me? And, I invite you to join me in that pondering. What might the new way look for us?

Try on these words from Steve Garnaas-Holmes from Dec 30th:

Beware the faith that judges the world
but leaves your own sin intact;
for God, who deeply loves us as we are,
does not intend to leave us that way.
Pray for the courage to love a God
who comes to remake you.

Let the Herod who sits on YOUR throne be frightened,
and see in his fear his weakness.
Let your privilege be troubled;
for God who transforms everything
begins with you.
Be prepared to let go of the world you know and love,
so you may receive the world
you have not yet imagined.⁴

What does it mean for you and me to go home by another way – a new way.

And finally – allow this video from Work of the People to speak into your life and my life, suggesting the possibility that God can indeed make all things new – in you and in me – as we enter this new year following the light of Christ.....

Transcript from Work of the People – Behold, I Make All Things New

Behold, I make all things new. Behold, I make all things new. Behold, I make all things new. Let there be light, let there be light.

God unseen, is taking form. God unseen is taking form. God unseen is taking form. Let there be life, let there be life.

The first and last is surging forth. The first and last is surging forth. The first and last is surging forth; becoming life, becoming life.

Behold, I make all things new. Behold, I make all things new. Behold, I make all things new, let there be light, let there be life.

Invitation to the table.....

I don't know what the new road home looks like for you. Maybe it's a different way to think and talk about politics this year – particularly with those with whom you differ. Maybe it's attending to issues in your family that you resist addressing – issues that need the light of Christ and the love of God to be remade. A relationship that's perhaps not what it ought to be. There is another way the Gospel says.

The Magi were told – there’s a problem ahead – take a new road. This is the invitation from the One who loves us – whose love and grace is to be born anew in us. Come, take a new road with Me.

Coming to this Table means you accept that invitation to join this One in His love expressed in the world. Thus begins the path this new year - another way for us to be “Christs” in the world. Let us gather.

1. Steve Garnaas-Holmes, Dec 24, 2021 devotional from Unfolding Light.
2. Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri, Sanctified Art “Close to Home” Sermon Planning Guide, 2021.
3. Howard Thurman–Howard Thurman, *The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations; December 28th, Inward/Outward*,
4. Steve Garnaas-Holmes, Dec 30, 2021 devotional from Unfolding Light