

## Epiphany 2024

### Another Road

I want to start this morning by taking a short poll. First: How many of you still have your Christmas Tree up? Second: What do you have on the top of your Christmas tree, a star or an angel. How many of you have stars on top of your tree? How many of you have angels? The reason I asked the first question is: Christmas, from the Christian perspective isn't truly over until January 6th or Epiphany, the day we traditionally celebrate the visit by the Wise Men.

The reason I asked the second question is: I think there are two types of people. Some are star people and some are angel people.

Biblically, the Angel represents those who had been waiting for the Messiah, for a sign from God, for a long time, like the Shepherds. They knew what the Angel meant when he told them about a Savior, a Messiah. They remembered the old prophecies. They remembered with anticipation.

And the Star was for those who were still searching, those still unsure, those still with questions, those on a quest to find out about this mystery and message from God wrapped up in human flesh and swaddling clothes.

A friend reminded me that God sent both the Angel and the Star because God always meets us where we are.

### When You Follow a Star and Find a Stable

Think of the disappointment these men must have experienced who through the night had traveled many miles by camel to discover that the star had come to rest over a stable. They had followed a star and found a stable. Surely they were expecting a palace or perhaps a stately mansion. Think how they must have felt. Their vast disappointment as they look down from some nearby Judean hill and came to the realization that their destination was a stable.

Following stars and finding stables is a common occurrence in human experience. Who among us has not at some time in our life fixed our gaze on some high and lofty star only to find it leads to a stable.

Hundreds of examples could be given. A young man graduates from high school full of great dreams and expectations about the future only to wake up one day and discover himself enmeshed in the very drudgery that he had promised himself he would avoid.

A man comes to retirement age. He thinks of all the good things he's going to be able to do. After a few weeks, however, he begins to discover that retirement is not exactly what he thought it would be. The day starts growing longer. The hours become more oppressive. All of us at some time in our life follow a star only to discover a stable. The problem is how to turn that stable into a moment of salvation. What is it that enables wise men of every age to turn the stables of life into victory?

1. For one thing, they look for God in the stable
2. For another, they offer their best to God
3. And finally, because of what happens in the stable, they mark a new direction for their life.

### **Angel at work?**

The British express train raced through the night, its powerful headlight piercing the darkness. Queen Victoria was a passenger on the train. Suddenly the engineer saw a startling sight. Revealed in the beam of the engine's light was a strange figure in a black cloak standing in the middle of the tracks and waving its arms. The engineer grabbed for the brake and brought the train to a grinding halt. He and his fellow trainmen clambered down to see what had stopped them. But they could find no trace of the strange figure.

On a hunch the engineer walked a few yards further up the tracks. Suddenly he stopped and stared into the fog in horror. A bridge had been washed out in the middle and ahead of them it had toppled into a swollen stream. If the engineer had not heeded the ghostly figure, his train would have plummeted down into the stream. While the bridge and tracks were being repaired, the crew made a more intensive search for the strange flagman. But not until they got to London did they solve the mystery. At the base of the engine's headlight the engineer discovered a huge dead moth. He looked at it a moment, then on impulse wet its wings and pasted it to the glass of the lamp. Climbing back in to his cab, he switched on the light and saw the "flagman" in the beam.

In the fog, it appeared to be a phantom figure, waving its arms. When Queen Victoria was told of the strange happening, she said, "I'm sure it was no accident. It was God's way of protecting us." — No, the figure the engineer saw in the headlight's beam was not an angel...and yet God, quite possibly through the ministry of His unseen angels, had placed the moth on the headlight lens exactly when and where it was needed. Today's Gospel tells us how God sent a star to lead the magi to His Son Jesus.

*(Billy Graham from Unto the Hills; quoted by Fr. Botelho).*