



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring Term

Series – Start of the New Year

Gathering & Date – 6th January 2019

Title – A New Year!

Preacher – Neil Shepherd

Reading – Matthew 2:1-12

Main message of this talk in one sentence: What is this New Year all about and what does God have to say about it?

Main points –

Have you reflected back over the last year and have you looked forward to the year to come?

What is God saying to you? How do you feel about this coming year?

Is your diary full of good plans that will help you become all the God has planned for you?

Read Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany remembers the story of the magi visiting Jesus. Whilst the story has lots of detail added, the main point is that it points to the work of Jesus for all people, the Gentiles, and not just Jews. The magi bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh which remind us that Jesus is King (gold), God (frankincense) and that his purpose is to be a sacrifice for all in His death (myrrh). Epiphany is about a revelation of these truths to all people and the question we need to respond to us 'what are we going to do about it?' At the start of this New Year, we need to allow these truths to be made a fresh to each of us.

Jesus' journey from his birth was not easy and he had to escape with his family to Egypt for a time to get away from Herod's rage and fear. Just as His journey was not easy, we too will face challenges on the way. How will we respond to stepping into all the God has purposed and planned for us?

Jesus, in His manifesto, at the start of His earthly ministry proclaimed that 'the time is now, the Kingdom of God near.' (Mark 1:15) God's kingdom is made available through the work of Jesus and this is more than a once for all event. This is an ongoing process of daily allowing God's spirit to speak and guide us. The process is described in Mark 1 as repent and believe. Repentance is a process of recognising that God is speaking through His word and our daily events to show us that he wants to bring about a change of mindset about our own internal thoughts and emotions. The process is belief which involves making a plan with God and others so that we begin to walk out God's kingdom in our lives.

As we look at the year ahead, how are we allowing God to guide and direct the year ahead so that He is, front and centre, Lord of our lives?

For further thought and prayer –

1. What are your hopes for this year?
2. What are your emotions about this coming year? Are you excited, apprehensive, worried, fearful...?
3. The three gifts brought by the magi symbolised attributes of Jesus; gold representing His Kingship, frankincense representing His Godship and myrrh which represents His death. Which of these do you need a greater revelation in this coming year?
4. What was God saying to you in the talk?
5. What is holding you back from fulfilling God's call on your life at the moment?
6. Where is God getting your attention to 'repent' – a change of mindset – about some of the issues holding you back?
7. What do you need to 'believe' – make a plan – so that you can move forward? The answer to this may need further honest conversations with other who you trust.
8. How can your community support you and how can you support those around you in this coming year?
9. Pray for each other