

Matins for the Epiphany of Our Lord

Bulletin

Audio

"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

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In ancient times, the people reckoned dates and times not according to some arbitrary point, before and after which everything was to be understood. There was no C.E. There was no 'Common Era,' as the fatuous would put it, for nothing is common to all mankind, in all times and at all places. Rather, they dated things according to who was in power, and how long into his rule things were.

For this reason, the Gospel of Luke dates the Birth of Christ as occurring during *the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria*, and sets the time of John the Baptist's preaching as being *in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar*.

This is a most natural way of telling time, for even we have the habit of describing events, at least outside of school, of happening not at a certain number, for we rarely remember dates, but rather during periods, such as 'in the Reagan years,' or 'during Obama's first term.' We remember things according to who is in power, and according to the events of this powerful person's reign.

All calendars throughout the world determine the times according to who is sovereign. The Japanese tell their dates according to what year into the rule of their emperor today happens to be, just as the Romans told theirs according to what king or ruler was in power at their time, and the Greeks according to what Archon was in charge of their democracy in their time. It is only natural, for rarely do we recall a seemingly arbitrary number, but we remember persons,

even as God does.

We might think that we have distanced ourselves from such a way of thinking, that we should judge the very flow of time based on some dictator's time in power. But this is not so.

New Years has just passed. 2023 has just passed. The year 2024 AD is now upon us.

We focus on the number, 2024, we rarely think of the letters AD, yet the AD is all that matters.

Those letters stand for *Anno Domini*; Latin for 'the Year of our Lord.'

For we, as Christians, as all mankind, judge the days and times according to who is in power. And even as John the Baptist preached *in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar*, so now you hear this sermon in the two thousandth and twenty-fourth year of the reign of *Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God*.

We may speak of the past election, in 2020, how it may have gone right or wrong. We may speak of the coming election in 2024, how it will turn out. It is all meaningless, for though we may vote for this or that leader for a short term of fleeting and temporal rule, none of these people are in power, for today is not the year of Biden, or the year of Trump, nor the year of any miserable sinner. It is the year of our Lord, and His kingdom, the two thousandth and twenty-fourth year of His reign, in His empire, which shall have no end. This we confess, every time we date a check at the bank, or tell a liquor store owner our birthday.

All earthly rulers, then, must pay homage to the one ruler, according to whom all times are judged, even as God commanded in creation that the stars of night should judge all times. For if it is proper to determine times by the stars of night, so by the creator of the stars of night it is better that all times be determined.

So three kings look to the stars, and see one hovering in the East, over a meaningless and unheard of town called Bethlehem. They go, to seek the God of the stars. They go to find Him who is beyond time, who created time, who now lives within time, that we may live forever outside of time; that is, that we may have eternal life.

These magi come, to commemorate the New Year, the first Year of our Lord, the

God of all creation.

What then, shall we do, so many years into the reign of our king?

Perhaps we should heed the orders of that king, called Herod, who spoke evil, but which God meant to be spoken for good:

'Go, and search carefully for the child.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12.