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It's been about two weeks now since Christmas.

Enough time to take back any unwanted gifts
(not that we ever get those).

Enough time to exchange gadgets that weren't working
or to buy batteries to make them work.

In other words,
enough time to play with all the toys we got.

When I was younger,
my brother and I had fully explored all our toys by now,
having enough time to not only play with them according to the
manufacturer's intentions,
but also to add a few intentions of our own.

G.I. Joe's went into the tub on underwater missions
and Lego cars became Lego time-traveling Deloreans
with just a few minor modifications and a little imagination.

I can imagine little baby Jesus,
now little toddler Jesus,
sitting on the dusty floor of his house,
playing with the wooden blocks
and maybe a puzzle or two
made by his carpenter father.

I can imagine him whiling away the hours.
He's not waiting to gather disciples;
he's not waiting for the right time to head to Jerusalem.

no he is waiting in the midst of a life still simple,
still burdened only by the natural desires of any human child:
food,
warmth,
momma.

Perhaps he is waiting for his father to return
with another scrap of wood turned into a beautiful toy,
or maybe he is waiting until Mary takes him into her arms
and they go out for a pail of water,
down at the well.

And then a knock.

Joseph coming home late,
sending his apprentice on ahead?

Mary goes to the door to find out,
Jesus looking on behind her.

She is not prepared for what she sees.
Who could have been?

These foreigners,
lined up outside the door,
looking as though they have stars in their eyes.

In the way they carry themselves
and in the way they dress
there is no doubt that these are important people,

but in their faces
she sees something almost lost,
almost found.

She sees a longing,
a hope that she remembers feeling within herself
not so long ago.

She sees this,
but wonders still,
who are these men?

We know her story,
Mary's story:
a soul magnifying the Lord,
the earliest proclamation of the Gospel
by a poor virgin in the midst of a difficult pregnancy,
a difficult life.

But we know precious little about these wise-men.

We can assume that wherever they came from
and whatever trade they practiced,
they were important people:
tribal elders,
leaders,
perhaps even kings.

They were people of influence and power,
and they put all those things aside,
for a season,
perhaps a lifetime,
and followed a star.

Matthew speaks of three gifts,
but he never speaks of three wise-men.

I imagine there to be a multitude,
a horde,
an army of wise-men.

I don't think that Matthew would have said that Herod was afraid of
anything the wise men had said,
no matter how wise,
if they had been just three.

No, I imagine all the wisdom of the world making its way to Herod,
and then gathering in front of Mary that day,
asking after her little boy.

It would have started with just one.
One man noticing something odd,
something a little funny in the sky.
He put down his scroll
and just headed out.

Along the way he met others
who had also come out of foreign lands,
lands beyond the sea,
lands beyond the desert,
lands beyond the mountains,
in search of hope,
in search of light,
in search of a star
burning brightly
even as morning turns to afternoon.

At some point, early on,
there were just three,
but they were soon joined by three more here,
and nine more there,
until they stopped counting numbers,
and just started telling stories.

“I know why I'm crazy enough to be out here,
but what on earth
could make you want to leave behind all that you had,
not knowing if it would be there when you returned?”

Well, he didn't have an answer,
he only knew that he had the same question.
He had the same question,
and a thousand others burning inside him.

Questions about a light in the darkness;
questions about life that never runs out;
questions about the only things that have ever mattered,
how to love God,
and how to love your neighbor.

We all have our own questions,
our own joys,
our own burdens,
and our own journeys that we bring to Jesus.

We bring them to the spirit that moved over the deep.
We bring them to the baby lying in a manger.
We bring them to the child on the dusty floor.
We bring them to the teacher,
wandering the Judean hillside.

We bring them to the cross
and we bring them to the empty tomb.

We make our journey every day to meet Jesus,
and every week to meet him in this place.

We are just like these wise men,
for wisdom often does not lie in having answers,
but in asking questions.

We look within ourselves,
to our hearts and souls,
and we see something
almost lost,
almost found.

We look, and we find ourselves outside that door,
among a whole multitude of seekers.
Three wise-men
or a thousand,
it does not matter in the end.

What matters is that we stand with them,
outside that door,
knocking,
seeking to bring before Christ
our gifts and our sorrows.

What matters
is that we bring those things before God,
and God offers blessing:

blessing our questions,

and blessing us to our journey's end.