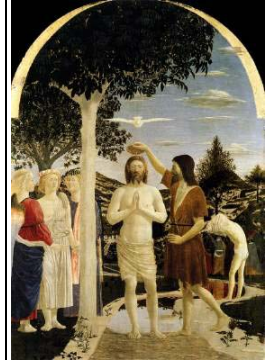


**May God Never Leave Us****the Same Way He Finds Us when We Enter This Place**

“We find ourselves once again at that time of year when we encounter the intriguing story which tells of wise men, a jealous and power-hungry king, a star, a dream, and the



“Baptism of Christ” by Piero della Francesca (1416-1492), National Gallery, London. © Web Gallery of Art. As we will hear in the Gospel lesson Sunday, “And when Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens split open and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on him.” In the Psalm we’ll read, “(W)ith my holy oil I have anointed him.”

death of innocent children,” the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Feast of the Epiphany sermon (Jan. 6, but commemorated Jan. 4).

“Have you ever wondered why these foreign astrologers from the East have been called ‘wise men?’” Pastor Thelander asked.

“First, these men sought Christ. . . . As this new year unfolds, I want to challenge you today to be seekers after Christ. . . . Resolve to follow him, wherever that may lead you. Pursue holiness. Make your relationship with Christ the primary pursuit of your life.

“Second, these men worshiped Christ. . . . As this new year unfolds, I want to challenge you to make the worship of God your primary focus and aim. . . . Do not be satisfied with information, but press on toward transformation in your life with Christ.

“Third, these men sacrificed to Christ. . . . As 2009 unfolds, I challenge you not to be content with ‘leftover’ living. Give to Christ your best self.

“Fourth, these men obeyed [as they went home another way] “changed and transformed.”

“As 2009 unfolds . . . may be not only worship him, but may we also rise and return home each week by another way. May God never leave us the same way he finds us when we enter this place.”

**Jesus’ Coming Can Be a Threat to Us, Not Just to Herod**

When we sing, “Haste, haste, to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary,” we might wonder, “What’s the rush? Can’t we just enjoy the moment?” the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec. 28) sermon.

“Can’t we simply revel in the joy of this occasion for a while? Can’t we just enjoy Christmas?” he continued. “As we ponder in our hearts what the birth of Jesus means, we see very soon [with Herod’s slaughter of Bethlehem’s male children to try to kill Jesus] that (Jesus’) coming involves not only the promise of joy, peace and hope; his coming also presents a challenge and a threat to the powers of darkness and to the entrenched power of earthly kings and kingdoms.

“Jesus’ coming can be threatening, not merely to Herod, but also to us, for he comes to shine the light into our hearts, to put to death in us all that is not God’s best for us.” “Something in our human nature”, Pastor Thelander said, “resists that. The darkness in all of our hearts forces Joseph and Mary to grab Jesus quickly, and to flee to Egypt.”

“What Herod did was real, and (p. 2→)

**Editor:** Box 972, Boise, ID 83701. 208-336-3951, harbingermail@aol.com

**Pastor:** The Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander, epworthrector@msn.com

**On the Web:** [www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org](http://www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org)

**Sundays, 10:00 a.m.:** Word & Table service

**Sundays, 11:30 a.m.:** Refreshments, conversation

**Sundays, 11:45 a.m.:** Moderated post-service discussion

**Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.:** Evening Prayers

**For the poor:** Fresh potatoes, paper plates, plastic silverware and napkin sets, turkeys, hams, canned yams, sweet potatoes, corn, green beans, cranberry sauce, ready-to-serve rolls, butter or margarine in 1-lb. tubs, stuffing mix, disposable salt/pepper shakers, frozen pies, onions, cake/dessert mixes, tamale-making ingredients: pork cushion meat, masa corn meal.

**Readings, 1/11:** Is. 42:1-8; Ps. 89:20-29; Acts 10:34-38; Mark 1:5-11. **1/18:** 1 Sam. 3:1-10; Ps. 63:1-8; 1 Cor. 6:11b-20; John 1:43-51.

**Prayer Emphases:** United States of America; Anglican Church of Canada; Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Burlington, VT, and the Right Rev. Thomas Ely; Yonge Street Mission, Toronto; parishioners on Esquire Circle.

(12/28 Sermon, cont’d.) is a real part of the Christmas story. It reminds us that the precious gift that arrived for us in the manger was a gift procured at the greatest possible cost. It reminds us that although God’s love for us is deep and profound, our brokenness and our self-sufficiency (are) also deep, and (they push) hard to reject that love. The Good News of Christmas, however, is that God’s love to us in Christ cannot be thwarted or defeated. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. . . . In the midst of this wonderful season, let us receive the grace he offers us with joy.”