

**Matthew 2 v12**

**'They went home another way'**

**Introduction ...**

As some of you know – I haven't got a good visual memory – I can't easily recall faces, works of art, town centres ... so if I go somewhere new, I've learnt to try and log some of the places I pass. For example, when I went to Tiverton for a funeral – I had to park a little way from the church – getting to the church was fine – I could see the tower – but getting back to the car would not be so straightforward so I tried to list the shops or other buildings I'd passed to have some help on the way back.

**The Wise Men**

On this first Sunday in 2021, I wonder if the Wise Men had done something similar on their outward journey ... with rivers, oases, mountains .... Once again – it was OK on the way there – until they stopped following the star and thought that they knew better ... and thus ended up in Herod's Palace.

But on the way back – not only no special star to follow but also they had to go back 'a different way' to thwart Herod. Their previous landmarks – at least for the first part of the journey – were of no help. Also – they'd had so many expectations changed: the King they had travelled so far to meet and with such expensive gifts ... not who, what or where they'd expected.

**For us**

It's both easy and fruitful to relate this to our own situation. We will have to continue to find another way to live, to deepen our discipleship, to serve God – obviously in the first part of 2021 – but also beyond.

Have you considered how you will approach prayer and Bible meditation or study this year ... would a change – 'another way' be good to refresh and stimulate your relationship with God ... there are now so many different aids or helps for this.

In terms of service – maybe God hopes that you will use your gifts in a different way – gifts of time, skill and money. The wise men probably thought that their gifts would be stored in a Palace – not used by refugees!

And as a church – we need to continue to discern what God has in store for us ... without some of the familiar landmarks of the past – be they people or ways of doing things ...

- We will be looking at our music
- We will be looking at the ways in which we enhance our on-line presence and interaction
- We will be participating in a Deanery initiative called “Shaping for Mission”

We could feel that all these are being forced upon us ... as the Wise Men were, in a sense, forced to find a new way to return home ... but that doesn't mean that God will not guide or will not bless these new ways.

I'm going to finish with the end of a piece from Iona – slightly adapted – words put into the mouth of one of the Wise men:

***“We found it hard  
And intellectually demeaning  
To bow the knee to the son of refugees***

***And all this  
All this upset was compounded  
When it came to journeying back  
And we discovered that  
We had to go home by another way  
That is the trouble with God  
He does not let you leave as you came.  
He sends you back  
Stripped of your presumptions  
Making for home by another way”***

“Cloth for the Cradle” © 1997 WGRG

**May we be willing to let go of familiar ways that are no longer helpful and previously held assumptions as we continue to travel home with God and to God. Amen.**