



**VILLAGE
CHURCH**

Presbyterian (USA)

Love Has Come: Now What?

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 2:1-12

December 26, 2021 — Sermon by Rev. Sally S. Wright

During the Advent season, do you ever get the sense that the biblical characters are always traveling? On their way somewhere? Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem to register for the census. The shepherds saw angels and traveled to see the baby Jesus. And then the wisemen see the star and start heading west. By this point in the story, don't you think Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wisemen were a bit weary from all the traveling? By this point in the season, don't you feel a bit weary?

And yesterday, we celebrated the pinnacle of the season: Christmas Day. And now, Christmas Day has come and gone. Baby Jesus has been born and is in the stable. Presents have been bought and unwrapped. In a sense, I am wondering: now what?

In some ways, it seems as if the season is over. Yet, in other ways, it seems like something is just beginning.

I am always a bit baffled by the way this wisemen text tells us what *didn't* happen. Verse 11: they enter the house, pay homage, give gifts. The very next verse: they are leaving—home by another road. It is as if we get just enough information to write the thank-you notes before the wisemen are already leaving, already heading home. I wonder if the wisemen wanted to hold baby Jesus? Talk to Mary and Joseph? Tell them about the star and what it means to them? Don't you wonder if the wisemen and their entire traveling caravan took some time to marvel at this new baby whom they know will be God with us?

If we can use our imaginations today, let us imagine ourselves in that space between the giving of the gifts and the going home. What happens in there? Perhaps, literally, that is what today, the day after Christmas, is all about for you. Maybe you are having one last meal with family. Maybe you are running

some errands that have come up. Maybe you having a super-easy morning—drinking coffee in your pajamas on your couch. Maybe you have plans to take treats to people who spent yesterday alone.

Yet, theologically, how do we imagine ourselves in that space after God's giving us the gift of choosing to be the God who is with us? In other words, if Emmanuel means God dwelling with us, I wonder what it would mean for us to dwell with God? How do we meet God in this space between giving the gifts and going home? How did the wisemen meet God, as a baby, between the giving of the gifts and then returning home?

Could you take some moments today, or in the next few days, to consider dwelling with God? I have two small examples of times when I have glimpsed a moment of dwelling with God.

This Christmas season, I have been asking people what food they must taste to make it feel like Christmas to them. Mostly, I have received answers relating to cookies. Yet, for me, it is not Christmas until I have tasted my family's recipe for homemade orange sweet rolls. The only people in my family who can currently make these rolls are my mom and I. If you have ever made any type of filled roll from scratch, you know that the process is laborious, takes at least a day, and can get messy at times. After we make them, then we must wait to eat them until Christmas morning brunch. Oh, the wait. But the first bite of that deep orange flavor tucked into the light roll with a luscious orange icing on top! That first bite is what I imagine sitting down to breakfast with God is like. We always eat them between the gifts and going home. And what is super special is that there are usually enough to have them for another breakfast or two before getting in the car and going home.

It is in that moment that I sense a glimpse of

dwelling with God, Emmanuel. God delighting in us and we are delighting in God.

I saw a whole group of Village folks dwell with God for a moment one afternoon. We were visiting our last community of sugarcane workers in the Dominican Republic. In some ways, we felt like we had given gifts—we had helped bring medical care, food, and play to three other communities that week. This last community was nestled in the soft, rolling hills of the Dominican Republic. We filed out of the bus and stopped for what felt like an eternity. All we could do is stare at the beauty of the land all around us. We could see green sugarcane for miles and miles. We could see mountains in the distance. After working hard all week doing manual labor in a tropical climate, we were ready to go home the next

day. But that moment of seeing the green, rolling hills. That moment of stopping to see how beautiful the country was. That moment was a moment where 25 people stopped to feel that they dwelled with God as much as God dwelled with them.

These glimpses are just that—moments in time—and not long ones at that. But, I wonder what happens if we train ourselves to see the moments not just when God is with us, but when we can pause and delight in what God has given to us.

Can we be closer, even for just a moment, to the wisemen, who were surely filled with great joy at the sight of this new child in the world?

Pray with me: Lord, show us how to delight in the gifts that you have given us, most especially the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.