

**Will We Have 20/20 Vision?
Matthew 2:1-12
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

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(The Bob Seger song, "Turn Turn Turn, was sung just prior.)

No matter how old you are you probably know that song! It became a number 1 hit for The Byrds in the US in 1965. (It only made it to #3 in Canada!)

It wasn't original with them. The song was written by Pete Seeger in the 1950's and recorded in 1959! But Seeger didn't write it! Well, he did the music and added the title, but the lyrics are straight out of Ecclesiastes 3.¹ It may be the only verses of that book that anyone knows!

And why that bit of musical history? Because Ecclesiastes 3 is always, always the lectionary reading for New Years. I realize we are a bit in no person's land today—post New Years, and pre-Epiphany, so we are doing a bit of both in our scripture readings. Time and wise men!

But that is what this season is about isn't it? It is about time. I don't know how many times in the past week and a half that I have asked Anita, "What day is it?" Without the structure of work, with extra church services, without Coffee and Conversation and committee meetings I just didn't know! Add in college football games on Wednesday and Hockey in the morning! How is anyone supposed to know when we are?

Then we have the added confusion of a new year. How long will it be before you get the year right?

Then we are supposed to make resolutions; promises about what we are going to do differently this year, what we are going to change. It is that time of the year!

That time though?

I remember sitting in a philosophy class, or maybe it was physics class, when the question was asked, "What is time?"

At first glance it seems a silly question! It is 10:32!

But no, that is what time it is!

But what is time? Does it even exist? (Didn't expect to have to think on a Sunday morning, did you?!) It has long been a question. St Augustine in his *Confessions* said "*If no*

¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn!_Turn!_Turn!

one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not."² We know what time is as long as no one asks us!

If you'd asked an ancient Greek to define it, he would have asked you which aspect of time you were talking about. You see, the Greeks had three distinct concepts of time: *aion*, *chronos* and *kairos*.

Personified as gods, *Aion* represented the everlasting eternity of the Greek Cosmos, whereas *Chronos* (where we get our word Chronology, or the way we tell time) symbolized clock time, and *Kairos* the right time.³

In our day Merriam-Webster defines time as *A) the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continue, or B) a nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future.*⁴ It is the progression of this happening and then this and then this and then this. In many ways, we create it!

Which time are you creating? What time are you using? Are YOU using. That is important! Time is relative. We discovered that when we tried to figure out a time to have a video chat with our children on Christmas! We are in 3 different time zones! It is 10:32 right now, but for Alison it is 9:32 and it's only 8:32 for Savannah! It is 10:32 for our friends Jonathan and Tina Bailey, but pm! They are in Bali!

Time is relative. It depends on where you are, how you choose to use it, and how you choose to see it.

Whenever I hear the story of the magi, the wise men, the kings, (it really makes a difference how who they were, don't you think) there are a couple questions that always come to my mind. One is where they were? We know right? They were in the east, maybe Persia, maybe Arabia. Maybe the Orient? We really aren't sure, but we know they were "over there" because of the song, right? *"We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we travers afar....Star of wonder star of light, star with royal beauty bright. Westward leading..."*

That is the story we know, right? But the text says that they say the star *"rising in the east."*

So were they in the west?

Which way were they looking?

And why just them? How many others just failed to see it? I mean, how often do you go out at night and just look at the stars. Do you see anything new and different? I don't! I am an Eagle scout (that's a Chief Scout in Canada!) I took the Astronomy Merit Badge, but I

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time#Philosophy> [Augustine of Hippo](#). *Confessions*. Archived from the original on 19 January 2012. Retrieved 9 April 2011. Book 11, Chapter 14.

³ <https://www.stephenchamberlain.net/personal-reflections/chronos-and-kairos-the-gods-of-time>

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time>

really can't find many things in the sky now without my Skyview App!⁵ Yet these stargazers saw something new?

And maybe there were others that saw it. They were out one evening and said, "*Hey, that is new! Right over there, just over Mohammed's house! That wasn't there last night!*" They saw it. They were even amazed about it. But that is where it stopped! They never went in and said, "*Honey, I am going to be leaving tomorrow! Where? Oh, I don't know. I am going to follow that new starry thing in the sky and see where it leads!*" Can you imagine a family member saying that? Can you imagine saying that?

And yet that is exactly what these individuals did. They had a vision of something... something that they didn't even understand. It was a vision of something new that pulled them forward.

Two years ago Anita and I gathered here for the first time. 2018 was a wonderful year as we celebrated our 150th Anniversary as a congregation. Each month Marge would come and remind us of something that helped form us, that has made us who we are.

Last year we did a lot of work—well, we received the benefit of a lot of work done by our Constitution and By laws committee—as we got our legal standing caught up. While the numbers aren't in, it appears that we made sure that we are working off a firm financial foundation.

So now, now as we begin a new year, a new decade, I wonder if it is not time for us to look forward. To ask the question what's next?

This week Father Richard Rohr quoted Shane Claiborne who remarked that "*It's the difference between being in a canoe and a rowboat. In a canoe, you look forward as you row, but in a rowboat, you look back as you move forward. Our way forward is behind us. . .*"⁶

We are rowing into the future, firmly aware of where we have been, of the people and traditions that have shaped us, have made us who we are. We are in this boat together, needing each one to take a turn. It is hard work rowing, especially in those times when it seems that the wind and the waves are against us!

But we are going forward, drawn by that vision of something.... what do you want to call it? The biblical term is the kingdom of God?

But what does it look like?

Can you see it?

We are beginning 2020. I will admit that whenever I hear that term all I can think about is having a vision test. Do you even know what 20/20 vision is? I looked it up this week! "*Having 20/20 vision does not necessarily mean you have perfect vision. 20/20 vision only indicates the sharpness or clarity of vision at a distance. If you have 20/20 vision, you can see clearly at 20 feet what should normally be seen at that distance. If you have 20/100*

⁵ https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.t11.skyviewfree&hl=en_CA

⁶ <https://cac.org/moving-forward-by-looking-back-2020-01-01/>

vision, it means that you must be as close as 20 feet to see what a person with normal vision can see at 100 feet.”⁷

How is your vision? (I do want to add that I am a bit hurt that a couple months ago I had a vision test and even got new glasses and no one noticed! It is OK, no one in my family noticed either!)

But that really isn't the issue! Not your physical vision, though that is important. But today, how is your spiritual vision?

Which way are you looking—towards the past, remembering the good old days?

The present—being aware of what is right now?

Or do you have magi vision, looking to the future and what God might be calling us to do and be?

That kind of vision does not depend on our knowledge of the nighttime sky, or even a keen theological knowledge. It has everything to do with a willingness to listen, to see, to dream, to dare.

In your worship guide this morning you have found a post-it note. I want to invite you to take a moment and dream, imagine, see where you feel God is leading us as congregation this year. The magi left home and expected to find a babe, a new king. They expected something! What about us?

As we follow this star, what might we find in December? It might not be where we expect? It might now be what, or even who we might expect. But what vision are you following this year?

What is it that if we were to bring it to life here at Port Williams United Baptist Church this year would make you fall down on your knees in gratitude, in worship?

Take a few minutes to write your vision down, and then I want to invite you to come and post it on this board. It might not be a star shining in the darkness, but who knows! There might be others who have seen the same things, who want to follow. It might just be where God is calling us this year!

⁷ <https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/eye-and-vision-problems/glossary-of-eye-and-vision-conditions/visual-acuity>