Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany the visitation to the Holy Family by the three wise men, the final visitors to the new born Christ-child, they have travelled considerable distances guided only by the light of a star in the sky, recognizing that through the form of this heavenly light a special event was being recognized and witnessed to by the heavenly realm itself. Such unusual celestial happenings were given enormous significance by our ancestors, as their understanding of the heavens above were clouded in mystery and intrigue, Godly powers were closely associated with any unusual activity and so religious as well as secular significance were naturally always aligned to the heavens above.

We may be somewhat more sophisticated in our understanding of the heavens today and yet there is something about the evening sky which acts as an irresistible magnet to us.

So captivating are those sparkles of light that it is so easy to lose ourselves completely in the awe and wonder of it all.

I guess for those three wise men that what they saw and followed must have filled them with the same kind of wonderment and of course such was the beauty of the light they witnessed in its arising that they abandoned normal life itself in order to follow it and to see the wonder of which it spoke.

Naturally when entering into the territory of a king, it was only common courtesy to let them know of your arrival and also to share that which they believed was being foretold by the star they were following.

Sadly of course we know how negatively this was received by Herod, and although we rightly condemn his response we must however recognize that those in authority even today in the democratic world in which we live can be and indeed often are very wary of anything which may shake the foundations of the power-base they currently employ.

Herod was renowned for his cruelty as well as for his subtle use of the words of diplomacy, however those from afar will not have known that at the time, how easily we can be drawn in by the sound of kind words and eagerness that we fail to recognize the truth which lies behind them. Reading people and their true intentions can of course be incredibly difficult, especially when we ourselves have already fixed in our own hearts what the responses of others should be. How often I wonder have you been really excited by some new idea or potential exploit that your own enthusiasm and positivity has tended to cloud your judgment.

Examples soon come to my mind of where I have really pushed for something only to find out that colleagues were really not keen or had a different agenda which made them see what I saw from a completely different perspective. I wonder however what the wise men really thought of that which they discovered at the end of their journey. Great signs and wonders came before them the fears and insecurities of people in positions of power were brought to the fore. The wise men had carried with them the fabled gifts of symbolic kingship to present to the heralded in Messiah and all they found when the star came to its rest was a simple home with a mother and child.

At first thought we may well have wondered what was so special, what was so different about this child than any other, no palace, no courtiers no one in attendance just a mother surrounding her child with nothing but love.

So ordinary and yet so special at the same time. Once again when we read the scriptures which we have before us we must be wary of placing upon them our own understanding and expectation instead of being open to the recognition of God’s within them. Our story does not speak of any sense of disappointment or at a hint of rejection by the three wise men, because the eternal truth of the story is to recognize the glory the wonder and the awe that is present whenever we look through things with the eyes of God.

Our world is full of awe and wonder and God surprises us every single day, from the simplicity of a beautiful winter’s morning to the beauty of the birth of a new born child. Beauty as they say is in the eye of the beholder, sadly often our eyes are clouded with our own expectations, yet those three wise men remind us that God surprises us in the everyday life which surrounds us. Their eyes were not to be clouded by their own expectations for they were to behold the wonder of God in all its fullness, seeing it portrayed through the wonderment of love.

So as we gather together today in giving thanks to God for the visitation of the Magi, may we lay before the lord Jesus Christ the precious gift of our own love for him, and in so doing may that gift be absorbed by Jesus and offered to the Father, for the Lord does not require our Gold, Frankincense or Myrrh only the gift of our love in return for his and that is why the wise men were not disappointed, for in witnessing true love, they were themselves richly blessed and their journey was made worth-while.

May our journey to the Christ-child be equally blessed that we may never underestimate our own ability to achieve great things when we do them in and for, the glory of God.

Amen.