

Sermon - 01-07-24
Epiphany & Holy Communion
Ps 72; Is 60:1-12; Eph 3:1-12; Mt 2:1-12

**“Star-Child, earth-Child, go-between of God, love Child, Christ Child, heaven’s lightning rod,
This year, this year, let the day arrive when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!”*

The wise men traveled about seven hundred miles just to see this Messiah. They were not Jews, but Gentiles who had read the Hebrew Scriptures – the Greek translation of the Scriptures. Only Matthew among the Gospel writers tells this delightful story about the magi from the east. In their journey, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:

“They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.” (Is 60:6)

God was pleased to reveal the coming of the Light of the world to the nations – represented by the learned travelers from the east. The super-bright star was their guide. (cue video)

The Feast of Epiphany marks the appearance or the manifestation of God in the midst of humanity. We in the family of God have called it the Day of Light or the Coming of the Light. The Cambridge dictionary defines epiphany as: “**a moment when you suddenly feel that you understand or suddenly become conscious of, something that is very important to you.**” More than a gift to humankind – the coming of Christ is the cosmic shift – the pulling back of the curtain of this reality to reveal the Creator God’s intention to bring the universe back into balance after the fall. The fall is the rebellion of humankind in the Garden of Eden against the will and authority of God.

In our day, people are very interested in cosmic and solar system events. The viewing and celebration of the space phenomena is evidence. Astronomical observatories sponsor star-parties and meteor viewings all over the world. We don’t usually have superstitious ideas about these sky events in our time – but we welcome the chance to see and talk about our universe together.

The magi from the east who saw the star in the sky and followed it to Bethlehem were a rare group of educated and adventurous men. Perhaps they were ahead of their time in their curiosity and interest. We could be more like them, couldn’t we? They trusted that the prophecy they read could and would be fulfilled. So, off they went to find real, primary evidence of it. They acted on their faith. We need to follow through on our beliefs. Keep following the star. He’s the Savior of all things.

When the Apostle Paul finally understood what the Lord was calling him to do – to spread the good news and to start Christian fellowships all over the Empire, he was surprised. This was not what he was trained to do in the temple – among scribes and Pharisees. He was grateful that God led him into the work, showing him how to engage with Gentiles in every province and city.

He wrote to the people of Ephesus:

“...so here I am, preaching and writing about things that are way over my head, the inexhaustible riches and generosity of Christ. My task is to bring out in the open and make plain what God, who created all this in the first place, has been doing in secret and behind the scenes all along. Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!

All this is proceeding along lines planned by God and then executed in Christ Jesus. When we trust in him, we’re free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go.” (Eph 3:8-13 MSG)

The interest and the action of these Gentile astronomers was the beginning of God’s plan to offer Jesus to everybody – no matter whether they knew the Law or the commandments of the Hebrews.

So do we all launch out on a real adventure – answering the needs of lost people according to the culture and the customs of our own century.

You and I don’t say things the same way Paul or Peter or any of the Apostles did. As we continue to follow the star, we

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bring our own style and experience to the task.

**Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign, down-to-earth Child, Star of stars that shine,
This year, this year, let the day arrive when Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!"*

Joy at Epiphany. Keep following the star! Amen.