



ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS  
CELEBRATING 200 YEARS

“SPREADING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST”  
EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD, YEAR C

ISAIAH 60: 1-6

PSALM 72

EPHESIANS 3: 1-12

MATTHEW 2: 1-12

A SERMON BY THE REV. CAROLINE STACEY  
JANUARY 6, 2022

The arrival of the magi from the East, likely from modern Iraq, represents the *epiphaino*, the revealing of Jesus' divine identity to non-Jews, to Gentiles. *All kings shall bow down before him, and all the nations do him service.* (Psalm 72).

We see the wise men faithfully following the star to the Christ child. We see the humility of these powerful magi – they are as kings in their own culture, but they kneel before this foreign child. That is the first thing that they do, upon seeing Mary and Jesus. Before they open their treasure chests and give their gifts, they simply kneel before Jesus.

Yet even as the Light of Christ enters the world, the darkness does not retreat or suddenly vanish. It intensifies. We see the darkness within the heart of Herod. His fear of losing power to this mysterious child. His scheming to find the Christ child for the opposite reason from the magi. Herod doesn't have mixed motives, as we humans so often do. Herod has a singular intention: to destroy, to extinguish the Light of Christ. People with evil on their minds do not usually give up

power willingly, and Herod and his dynasty have a lot of power. The gospel reminds us tonight as it so often does, that the more brightly light shines, the more the forces of darkness try and extinguish it. It is not only Light that spreads. It is important for us to remember that this Feast is not one-dimensional or a cosy, sentimental story. This night lays before us two rival kingdoms, two sets of principalities and powers.

God and Light are synonymous, especially in describing who Jesus is and what Jesus does. *God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all.* We are people for whom Jesus is the Light of the world and we follow the magi in kneeling before Jesus. Yet there is more than simply recognizing Jesus and kneeling before him. As the magi follow the light of the star to the light of the Christ child, they become a manifestation of God's light themselves. The Light of Christ spreads. The magi become part of the Light they seek, even as they return home by another road so that Herod's darkness cannot overcome it.

The word Epiphany is used only in the Scriptures for the visible manifestation of a hidden divinity. But there are closely related words all derived from the same root - usually translated “revelation” or “manifestation” - that Paul particularly uses, constantly.

In Corinthians 12:7, Paul writes: *to each of us is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*. Paul is talking about the Body of Christ, and identifies gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and their interpretation. The revelation of hidden divinity is not one star at one point in history. Spiritual gifts are ongoing mini-epiphanies of the Divine. Our faith and our presence in the world are each a revelation of God’s grace. Paul writes in Galatians of qualities that reveal the presence of the Divine: *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. Each of these qualities are parts of God’s own self, God’s image in us. They are divine gifts for the world. None of us has all the spiritual gifts - only God is perfectly whole and complete - but

each of us has part of God's image in us for revealing and spreading the Light of Christ in the world.

This week I was reflecting on the spiritual gifts I see in some special friends. As various friends came to mind I realized that when I thought of them, I thought not so much in terms of how long I had known them or the circumstances of our friendship, but in terms of these gifts. In one friend, the gift of deep faith; in another, the gift of material and spiritual generosity; in another the gift of kindness; in another the gift of endless patience; in another, the gift of joy. As I thought of these friends and God's gift of their friendships, I came to see that what is most appealing and magnetic about them to me is exactly this particular luminous, light-filled quality that they embody. This manifestation of Divine light and grace is at the heart of what makes them so special to me.

But let us not think only of our friends. What part of God's own life, what spiritual gifts, has God given *you* to be a blessing for others in this new year? What in you reveals the Light of Christ? *The Light shines in the darkness*

*and the darkness has not overcome it.* This is as true today as it was for the magi 2000 years ago. Let us never underestimate the power of the Light of Christ working through us to push back and transform the darkness in the world.

AMEN

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