

**PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**EPIPHANY - CELEBRATING ILLUMINATION**  
Reverend John R. Hanson  
January 9, 2021, 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Janet Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

*Epiphany embodies two themes. The first is the new vision that the Gospels present of God's grace and love being extended to all people and not just those descended from Abraham. This inclusivity is radical, scandalous, and even exciting. This offers us a wonderful opportunity for celebration in our communities. The second theme is that of going deeper into our understanding of Jesus – an "Epiphany" (an insight, a revelation) of who this Christ child is that we have welcomed to our world this Christmas season. Both journeys are the same, and both offer us reason to celebrate and praise Jesus.*

HYMN

*"We Three Kings"*

Blue # 646

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

***Oh, star of wonder star of night, star with royal beauty bright;  
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!***

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again;  
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a deity nigh;  
Prayer and praising, gladly raising, worshiping God on high.

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Glorious now behold him arise, king and God and Sacrifice;  
Alleluia, alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies.

CCLI Song # 38002 CCLI License # 1713417

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION      God is good.      **All the time.**

THE EPIPHANY GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12

*God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men

from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of

the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage."

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search

diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

**God is good!**

THEME AND VERSE (a poem by Howard Thurman)

**When the song of the angels is stilled / When the star in the sky is gone  
When the kings and princes are home / When the shepherds are back with their flock /  
The work of Christmas begins: To find the lost / To heal the broken / To feed the  
hungry / To release the prisoner / To rebuild the nations / To bring peace among  
brothers / To make music from the heart.**

*I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.* (Isaiah 42:6b-7)

HYMN

*"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan;  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow.  
In the bleak midwinter long ago.

Heaven cannot hold him, nor can earth sustain;  
Heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter, a stable place sufficed,  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him—give my heart.

CCLI Song # 3083174 CCLI License # 1713417

REQUEST - *I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1 (NRSV)*

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather in worship during these ordinary days of Word and witness,

**in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Let us remind ourselves that at baptism, God claims us as God's own people. We dare to give the gift of our very being to the son!

**Lord, you call us in righteousness, yet we do not receive your Holy Spirit. We want it to mold us against your will. You cleanse us in the waters of baptism, but we rely on your forgiveness as though it is dispensed at our command. You promise to be our God while we are giving our devotion to false gods, and we sell your glory short in our weakness! Save us, O Lord, as we are your people. You know us and still you choose us. Take us in your hand and keep us. Amen.**

The Father sends his own beloved son. Upon him God's Spirit descends. Jesus of Nazareth is anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. He will suffer death and be raised on the third day. Believing in him we receive forgiveness of our sins in his name. Now, in our baptism, we are joined with those who testify to all people, making witness to God's saving grace.

**To the glory of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION      God is good.      **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 3:13-17

*Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, appointed by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God's child.*

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup>And

when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION      All the time.      **God is good!**

#### SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON      "Ah-ha, I get it! I Can Show You!"

HYMN

*"This Little Light of Mine"*

Burgundy # 65

This little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine;  
This little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine;  
This little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine,  
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. (let it shine)

Everywhere I go, I'm goin'-a let it shine.

Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a let it shine.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Eternal Father, at the baptism of Jesus you revealed him to be your son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit; keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful to their calling as your people, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

READING: Isaiah 42:1–9

*God's servant Israel is endowed with the Spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever keep it from fulfilling its task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the new assignment of the servant is to bring light to the nations.*

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup>He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; <sup>3</sup>a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup>He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. <sup>5</sup>Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what

comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: <sup>6</sup>I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, <sup>7</sup>to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. <sup>8</sup>I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. <sup>9</sup>See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

READING: Acts 10:34–43

*Peter crosses the religious boundaries separating Jews from Gentiles when he proclaims the good news of God's forgiveness to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in Jesus' name.*

<sup>34</sup>Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, <sup>35</sup>but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup>You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup>That message spread

throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: <sup>38</sup>how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup>We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem.

They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; <sup>40</sup>but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, <sup>41</sup>not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup>He

commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

HYMN

*"Go Tell It on the Mountain"*

Green # 70

***Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.***

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
Behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.

The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth  
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born;  
And God sent us salvation that bless-ed Christmas morn.

SERMON

*"What right do we have to call God by a first name? Yet, it isn't what we call God but that God calls us! 'I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.' Looks like a co-mission has been made, time to go to work!"*

HYMN

*"Children of the Heavenly Father"*

Green # 474

Children of the heav'nly Father safely in his bosom gather;  
Nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e'er was given.

God his own doth tend and nourish, in his holy courts they flourish.  
From all evil things he spares them, in his mighty arms He bears them.

Though he giveth or he taketh, God his children ne'er forsaketh;  
His the loving purpose solely to preserve them pure and holy.

CCLI Song # 5039250 CCLI License # 1713417

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

**Most wonderful God, we are foolish and flawed, yet we are able to delight in the gift of your beloved son. As we gather, may the heavens be opened for us that we may catch a glimpse of his light and a love that transforms our common days with a beauty of your making. Meet us in the celebration of this meal, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen!**

#### BENEDICTION

Go now as a light to the nations. Honor the Lord, preach what you know of the risen Christ, and fulfill all righteousness.

**Amen.**

May God strengthen you and bless you with peace; may Christ Jesus bring forth justice for you and among you; and may the Holy Spirit alight on you and affirm you as God's beloved ones.

**May we walk in this light of Christ. Thanks be to God!**

*Scripture portions are reprinted from Words for Worship, copyright 2016 Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission. Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. All rights reserved. Used by permission.*

---

**Worship, as an action, continues to change.**

**Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.**

**Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.**

This Festival of Epiphany reveals to us who Jesus the Christ is, the one that has incarnated (made into human flesh) himself among us.

There are two clear revelations that would have been startling for the first readers of Matthew's Gospel. The first is that the Messiah has come entirely – for all people: Jew and Gentile, Wealthy and Poor, Oppressed and Oppressor. This entirety is a significant aspect of the Gospel.

And the second revelation is the mind-bending truth that has traditionally been seen as reflected in the Wise Men's gifts: This Child is Royalty (gold), Divine (frankincense), and yet, also, a self-giving Sacrifice (myrrh). All of these passages call us into praise for this, God's incarnation!

Defensiveness and otherness are two of the main characteristics of today's political, social, economic and relational world. In the quest for self-development, human beings have increasingly seen the "individual self" as distinctive and "other than" the rest of the population. Businesses work hard to "distinguish" themselves from their competitors and even nations work hard to identify themselves, drawing boundaries, naming enemies and allies, and putting huge investments into defending what is "uniquely theirs."

In the Epiphany of Jesus, it is revealed that Christ crosses all boundaries, refuses to be defensive or self-protective and refuses to draw lines that separate. The incarnate Messiah draws all creation together into one, and gives up safety, security and comfort so that he might be able to gift it to others.

Every single church community, and every person, longs for the light of God's glory and blessing to shine on them. This longing often leads us into trying to earn God's blessing through legalism or doctrinal purity which causes separation from those considered "unrighteous." Then our faith becomes something exclusive, something to defend against others who see things differently.

Epiphany reveals an alternative view of God’s glory – that with Christ’s incarnation the glory of God and God’s blessing are already ours. This is not something earned, and the experience of God’s glory is found in connecting and sharing with others and possibly while protecting and defending the least.

It is a good practice for each of us to ask: “Who needs to be included in our community right now?” and “Who needs to be protected?” – two questions that necessarily call us to show the self-sacrifice of Jesus in our own lives.

*Devotional notes from John van de Laar at [sacredise.com](http://sacredise.com)*

