

The Epiphany of Our Lord

03-01-2021

St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 60:1-6 Nations will gather in the Light of the coming King

Psalms 72:1-7,10-14 God will judge rightly and give justice to the poor

Ephesians 3:1-12 Paul - Preacher to the Gentiles, the Good News is for All

Matthew 2:1-12 The wise men from the East come bearing gifts for Jesus

Introduction

The Celebration set down for the 6th of January, which we are celebrating today is known as "The Epiphany of Our Lord."

This celebration is centred around the coming of the wise men to visit Jesus, with the symbolism that Jesus came not just for the Jews, but for all humanity.

Today I would like to look at the Epiphany in the readings, the wise men who came to visit Jesus, and also what the Epiphany might mean for us here in the 21st century.

Word Epiphany

Firstly, what do we think of when we hear the word Epiphany?

Maybe we think of a Light bulb moment? Or maybe an "Ah – Ha" moment?

Epiphany, is a Greek word, which literally means to remove the veil or to make known, or bring to light.

So as we celebrate the Epiphany today we see how the first Epiphany was to those who weren't Jews, symbolizing that Jesus has come into the world for the benefit of the whole world.

More information on the Magi

What do you think about when you think about the Magi or wise men?

In the reading from Matthew's Gospel today we hear how they came bearing gifts for the child Jesus. Today I would like to look a little at who they may

have been, but also and more importantly, what is the significance that they bring to the Christmas story.

When you think about the Magi, you may have been influenced by the old Christmas carol, “We three Kings of Orient are”, which has developed as part of the story, yet the Bible doesn’t tell us there were three, or that they were kings.

This is what others have surmised we may know about them:-

- They were “wise men who came from the East” so they were most probably men of science, learned men: astronomers, perhaps learned scholars of the priestly cast of Persia.
- The word Magi came to mean one who was skilled in knowledge of the world of the spirits, and from it we have our word magician.
- Believing that each person had his or her particular star, the Magi studied the movements of the planets in detail.
- The Magi may have come from Babylon, and if so they would have been familiar with and known the history of the Jewish people from the period of the Jewish exile in Babylon, so they would have known that the Jews were expecting a Messiah to come.

We are not told exactly how they knew that Jesus was a King, but we do know how they responded when they eventually found Jesus.

They knelt before him – Something you would only do for someone of significance.

They paid him Homage – which is to say that they gave Jesus Respect and Honour.

And they brought gifts, Gold symbolizing Royalty or Kingship, incense symbolizing Deity or the worship of God, and Myrrh a spice for anointing the dead symbolizing the importance of Jesus death and resurrection.

The wise men came seeking Jesus, not for what they could get, but to give honour and respect and gifts to God, because that is how we should respond to God.

In the actions of the wise men we are challenged as to how we ourselves respond to God.

Are we seeking God like they were?

Are we bringing our best gifts and offering them to God?

I recall having a bookmark which said, “The wise still seek Him.”

What do our readings today tell us about Epiphany

The readings from the bible today all point toward someone coming.

From Isaiah 60 we hear that a great Light is coming.

In Psalm 72 we hear that someone is coming to bring Justice.

Matthew's Gospel we hear the coming of the baby Jesus recognized as someone very important.

And in Ephesians we hear that it is Jesus who is the Revelation of God for the whole world.

The Epiphany points us clearly to the acknowledgement that Jesus is the "Light of the World."

My Epiphany

And so, in knowing that "Jesus is the Light of the World", we are called to respond. We all need to have our own "epiphany" about who Jesus is. It may have come very slowly over time for you, or you may have had a sudden conversion. The important thing is that it has happened for you, and you know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour now.

Although my parents had taken me to church from the first Sunday I was out of hospital, my epiphany story didn't come until I was around the age of 14 or 15 . I was in the kitchen with mum, and she challenged me, saying that to be a Christian you have to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Whist I had heard these words many times before, it was in this conversation that I internalized them, accepted what Jesus had done for me and committed to live out my life as a follower of Jesus.

What is your Epiphany moment of Jesus?

Conclusion

The Wise men are a symbol that Jesus is for everyone.

Their response to Jesus was to kneel down, pay homage and bring gifts.

Have you had an epiphany moment of Jesus?

How are you responding to Jesus in your life now?