

The Epiphany of our Lord  
02-01-2022  
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	A Prayer of Guidance for the King
Ephesians 3: 1-12	Paul proclaims God is revealed in Jesus
Matthew 2: 1-12	The Magi visit the young Jesus

### Introduction

Today we celebrate the Epiphany. The coming of the Magi, or wise men to worship the baby Jesus. It comes quite quickly after last week when we celebrated Christmas, the birth of Jesus. Some biblical scholars think it would have been one or two years after Jesus was born that the Magi arrived. Today, I would like to look at the story of the wise men who came to visit Jesus. Let's see what lessons their example of worshipping Jesus might have for us. But let's begin with the word "Epiphany" and how we respond when we hear it.

### Word Epiphany

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

In general usage I think the word conjures up the image of a "Light bulb moment" or, as some may put it, an "Ah – Ha moment". If we say someone has an epiphany, it usually means they have come to a sudden realization about something that they didn't know before. And usually once they have come to this new knowledge, it affects the way they behave going forward.

Today I would also like to share with you my Epiphany moment, but first let us explore what our bible readings have to tell us about this term, "Epiphany".

### What do readings today tell us about Epiphany

Our scripture readings for today all point toward someone coming.

The reading from the prophet Isaiah is a bit vague, but it talks of a great light coming and the glory of God coming.

Our Psalm for today talks about what will happen when the righteous king comes. It talks of how all other kings will bow before him, and of how they will bring him gifts. It tells of how he will bring justice, and help those in need.

In Matthew's gospel we hear of the wise men searching for the child who is to become the King.

Then, in the reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he makes it very clear, that the waiting is over. Paul declares Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Jews have been waiting for. And not only is Jesus the fulfilment of all the Jews were waiting for, but Jesus came for both the Jews and the Gentiles, and that means the whole world.

### Wise Men

So let us now look at the wise men, the symbolism that they bring, and how they help us to better understand the Epiphany.

Firstly, the wise men seem to represent the rest of humanity. The Jews were a pretty different nation. They stuck to themselves. They were a pretty self-righteous mob. They were of course God's chosen people, but chosen to bring God's blessing to the whole world, a task in which they continually fell down on, as mortal human beings. Jesus was a Jew, and the prophecies he is seen as fulfilling are all Jewish. Some scholars theorize that they may have actually been from remnant Jews who were left behind in Babylon from the exile, hundreds of years before, some think they may have just got a hold of the ancient Jewish texts, to know about the prophecies. Regardless of how they came to be part of the story, it is clear that they were from a long way away, and their journey was a result of some divine inspiration that lead them on their quest. In their coming, the wise men indicate that Jesus has come for all humanity. We proclaim that Jesus has come for all, in our liturgy, week by week, but how often do we think on Jesus as the Saviour for all humanity?

The wise men were open to discovering who Jesus was, and open to being lead by God. A journey of this nature would not have been an easy undertaking in Jesus time, and they were being lead by only a star. They must have been very open to God's leading. I think about going to somewhere I haven't been before, and the way we just put the destination into our phones and let the GPS guide us right to the doorstep. The wise men must have had a sense they were looking to see something special. And I think of their return journey, how they were warned in a dream to go by a different route, and they did so without question. Sometimes God may call us into new directions in our lives.

How open are we to listening to God's direction for our lives?

And what happened when the wise men finally met Jesus? It says they were overwhelmed with Joy. They knelt down, and paid him homage, and they showered him with gifts.

And the gifts they brought were also seen as very symbolic.

Gold, representing royalty, a gift for a King.

Frankincense, which is burnt before God, a symbol of deity.

And Myrrh, an expensive ointment used for embalming the dead, a prefiguring of the cross which was to come.

In the world in which we live, we are often expecting God to do things for us. Sometimes it seems to me that we view God as some sort of cosmic Santa Claus, who we expect to look after us. And God will look after us that's why he sent Jesus. But the wise men remind us that we are to bring our gifts to God. It is we who are created to worship God, not the other way around.

So, in the Epiphany, in the example of the wise men, we are reminded that we are to come to worship Jesus, to bow down before Jesus, to know the Joy that this brings, and to then bring our best gifts, and offer them to Jesus.

### My Epiphany

Have you had an epiphany of the importance, in fact the necessity of Jesus, for your life?

I recall as teenager standing in the kitchen with my mother. She was standing at the sink washing up, and I was, tea towel in hand, doing the wiping up. She challenged me along the lines of, "Being a Christian is not something that happens automatically, you need to personally accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour." I committed to do that there and then. It wasn't a profound conversion like some people have. I was a regular Church attender, and had already been baptized and confirmed. But it was a step in my journey of faith, where I accepted my need for Jesus, and that it was Jesus who needed to be "King" of my life.

### Conclusion

Today as we celebrate the Epiphany, we are given the wise men as a symbol that Jesus came for everyone. We hear how they were filled with Joy, and how their response to seeing Jesus was to kneel down, pay homage and bring gifts.

Have you had an epiphany moment of Jesus in your life?

How do you respond to Jesus?