



Second Sunday after Christmas

Sermon by Revd Allie Joseph



3 January 2021

READINGS

Isaiah 60: 1-6; Psalm 97: 1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3: 1-12; Matthew 2: 1-12

The Epiphany of our Lord

Look at what has come into the world. Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany, the first manifestation of Christ to the world. The true light of God that came into the world. Carl F. H. Henry once wrote: "The early Christians did not say, 'What has this world come to.' They proclaimed, 'Look who has come into the world.'"

This feast has been analysed by many and there are many traditions regarding these people who came all the way from the east to come and give homage to the new-born King of the Jews. It is the coming out of the Christ Child, the wise men who reportedly came from the east travels halfway around the world to come and bring homage to the Christ, the new-born King of the Jews. There are many traditions around the world surrounding the coming of the wise men, in the Gospel of Matthew we hear a different story to that of Luke. Matthew tells a very different story than Luke, he includes some more drama, lights, and special effects:

- Instead of shepherds, Matthew gives us Magi from the East.
- Instead of a stable, Matthew takes us to Herod's palace.
- Instead of a manger, Matthew shows us gifts fit for a king.
- Instead of angels, Matthew tells us of dreams.

The story of the magi or the three wise men is as old as time. We have even given them names Gaspar, Melchior, Balthazar. The Magi reportedly came from the ancient priestly family in Persia, modern day Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia the Yemen, or an area in what's now southern Turkey, northern Syria. And if you are so inclined you can go to the Cologne Gothic Cathedral and find a very ornate shrine that is believed to contain the remains of the three wise men. They studied the stars and came to Jerusalem the capitol city, to seek out the new King of the Jews.

The gifts they bring have special significance:

- Gold: is associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- Frankincense: is sometimes used in worship in Churches and showed that people would worship Jesus.
- Myrrh: is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell a little better; Christians believe that it showed that Jesus would suffer and die.

The lesson of we learn from the wise men comes to us via the first reading in the book of the Prophet Isaiah. **Arise and shine for your light has come.**

This light is the light of life, the Christ child is the light.

When we return to the gospel reading, we see how Herod is determined to stop the light from shining. He goes to great lengths and makes up all kinds of schemes and strikes all kinds of deals. He wants to end the light so his reign of darkness can continue. In the end he commits the worst of all, the killing of the innocents. All in a bid to stop the light from shining.

The wise men did not believe in Jesus the way we do. To them he was the material of their studies, they studied the stars and interpreted world events with this knowledge. Just as we were all out watching the sky a few weeks ago when there was what the world called the appearance of the Christmas star. I hear it was amazing to see.

On this Sunday we are invited to see the light, to follow the star, to bring homage to the King of kings, the son of God Jesus Christ our lord. We are also invited to recognise the darkness that is in the world, the spirit of evil and wrongdoing, all that which keeps us from seeing and recognising the King of kings. Like the earth was covered in darkness in the first reading we see our own world struggling to see the light. We too are invited to: **Arise and shine for your light has come.**

We are invited to give of ourselves, so that Christ light shines brighter in a world filled with darkness.

In the end we are invited to recognise the light within us, because Christ came to be born in the hearts of His faithful, the heart of the Christian is the throne of the saviour. Look carefully at what it is that is keeping you from seeing the light. Look at what is darkening your world, what is covering over the light that Christ has brought you so many years ago. I invite you to look at what has come into the world, the Light that no darkness can dispel.

I pray that you let the light in, let the light shine, encourage the light in others and be the light in the world filled with so much darkness. As the Unicorn says it in C.S. Lewis' *The Last Battle*: "This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it until now."

You and I are the light this world is waiting for.

At the start of the new year let us resolve to not fear the dark anymore but to be filled with courage and shine our light. May God bless you and all you love, with the light of the Christ Child.