

Pastor Roy's sermon from January 6, 2019 (Epiphany of Our Lord)

Children: Favorite star, favorite gift.

Epiphany, January 6th isn't usually on a Sunday. But this year we get to celebrate it together. In our celebration we begin with a star and curious travelers. They travel perilous roads seeking a king. What sort of king do you think they expect to find? What king is worthy of a bright star? When they arrive in the land close to the sea, they find the nearest king—Herod—surely he will know something. He asks the scholars and they point to Bethlehem. After one last short trip, they find a common family? Surely not what they were expecting. No great wealth and power.

They bestow their gifts to the unexpected king. They return home wondering—perhaps wandering--the rest of their lives—“What does this mean?” Likely Mary often asked the same question throughout Jesus' life. We who come face to face with this unexpected king, we can also ask, “What does this mean?” Perhaps Epiphany points to a moment or a period in each of our lives in which we have an “Aha!” moment. Oh, now I see what faith is all about, now I feel a connection to the Love and Life at work in the universe we call God.

Isaiah carries the theme of this celebration of revelation in light, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” He speaks of deep darkness and the dawn of hope and light. On January 6th, already the days are getting longer. As light returns to the north, we are reminded of hope, freedom, grace, life, and love.

The writer of Ephesians speaks of the riches of Christ, the eternal purpose of God carried out in Christ Jesus. The writer speaks of the boldness and confidence of faith. It's a bit of a mystery how weakness can be strong, how love can conquer hate and fear and overwhelm grief and loss of all kinds. In this life there is no avoiding suffering.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is not about getting the good stuff without sacrifice or pain. The brightness of Jesus' **life** and his courage facing **death** teaches us that we can let go of our need to be independent and strong in ourselves and entrust ourselves to the grace of God and the goodness of neighbors.

Epiphany, and our own epiphanies come only through prayer. Prayer teaches us to listen, to wait, to hope, to rest in the goodness of God. It teaches us to listen to the Spirit calling us to faithfulness in love. We find love as we receive love. Love comes from God. It matters less how much we are able to love. It matters much more how much we come to look for and see love in God, in God's salvation, in God's creation all around us. Our own epiphanies flow from being open to God's love as it comes to us. Not about mustering up our own love and goodness.

This is the story of Epiphany. A child. A star. The God/man Jesus who is the very presence of God without being any less or more than a man. Listen to this child. Listen to this God/man who leads us to our true self which is God's gift to us. Epiphany is an invitation to pray. Not as you are supposed to, but as you can. Pray as you can. Start with who you are and listen to God's love for you. Thanks be to God for the invitation of Epiphany.