

The Second Sunday of Christmas

The Epiphany

5th January 2025



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

HYMN

1 As with gladness, men of old
Did the guiding star behold
As with joy they hailed its light
Leading onward, beaming bright
So, most glorious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

2 As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger bed
There to bend the knee before
Him Whom Heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek Thy mercy seat.

5 In the heavenly country bright,
Need they no created light;
Thou its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
Thou its Sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing
Alleluias to our King

3 As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

4. Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

Introduction to confession

The grace of God has dawned upon the world
through our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.
Let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus, the light of the world,
illumine our hearts and forgive our blindness.
Lord Jesus king of all and child of Mary
grant us understanding and forgive our dullness
Lord Jesus word of salvation and bringer of good news
forgive our deafness
In your mercy forgive and heal us
Amen

May God beyond all naming
Revealed in the Christ child
draw you to himself for healing and forgiveness
and cleanse you from all your sins,
that you may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Collect for the Feast of Epiphany

O God,
who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:
mercifully grant that we,
who know you now by faith,
may at last behold your glory face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

**A Reading from The Old Testament
Isaiah 60 1-6**

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
² For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
³ Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.
⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.
- ¹² For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.



**A Reading from the New Testament
Ephesians 3 1-12**

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

³ This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— ² for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, ³ and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴ a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵ In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

1 Hail, Thou Source of every blessing,
Sovereign Father of mankind!
Gentiles now, Thy grace possessing,
In Thy courts admission find.

2 Once far off, but now invited,
We approach Thy sacred throne;
In Thy covenant united,
Reconciled, redeemed, made one

3 Now revealed to Eastern sages,
See the Star of Mercy shine;
Mystery hid in former ages,
Mystery great of love divine.

4. Hail, Thou universal Saviour!
Gentiles now their offerings bring;
In Thy temple seek Thy favour,
Jesus Christ, our Lord and King.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations
and believed in throughout the world.

Alleluia

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel is written in the 2nd Chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at the 1st verse.

Glory be to thee O Lord

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² 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." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ '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.'"

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to thee, O Christ

Reflection

Since the 4th century, this festival of the Epiphany was held on the 6th of January and has, in the West, recalled the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus.

The word epiphany means 'manifestation' or 'showing forth'. This was originally associated with the baptism of Jesus by John which marked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. However, the visit of the wise men was also seen as a 'manifestation' since it was understood as the time when the infant Christ was shown forth to the non-Jewish world as represented by the foreign wise men who had come from the East. The day marks 12th night which has traditionally been a time of dramatic performances and music, mumming and wassailing and when the decorations come down.

It is an old tradition that there were three visitors (because three named gifts) and that they were kings. In fact, prophecy encouraged the idea that they were kings, 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.' (Psalm 72:10 & Isaiah 60:3). These men came from an ancient priestly caste. They were astronomers, astrologers, dream interpreters. Daniel has such a title 'chief of

the Mogoi (Dan 5.11). It was customary for them to travel with oriental luxury and a large entourage which included calvary for protection, they rarely travelled in small numbers. They studied ancient texts and would know that the new king would be born in Canaan from prophecy. They took the main road from Persia to Jerusalem, and from there to Bethlehem, because of prophecy that the Messiah would be born in the city of David. (Num. 24:17; Micah 5:2). The significance of this visit is that manifestation of the infant Christ is to the world not just to the Jewish people. Epiphany is sometimes called the 'gentile Christmas'.

Today's Collect is based upon the biblical narrative of the visit of the Magi as recorded in the gospel and picks up a thought from St Paul, that 'we walk by faith and not by sight' on earth. (2 Corinthians 5:7).

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles:
"Mercifully grant that we, which **know thee now by faith, may be led onwards** until we come to gaze upon thy Exaltation [Majesty] by sight.

We are 'being led onwards', in the case of the Magi by a star, but ourselves by faith. The Magi gazed at the heavens and then upon the Only Begotten Son. We also 'gaze' and contemplate, in the Scriptures and within the Sacraments. In and through them we can see the 'glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Thus like the Magi, we have a 'star' to guide us (one of the names of Jesus is the Bright Morning Star). By faith we do not stumble through life trusting in luck and happenstance. Rather we can find ourselves led and guided. Through faith we decide to live trusting in the love, goodness and mercy of God. We learn to interpret what happens to us through the lens of this love. It is not strange to us that we should experience fresh insight and revelation which encourages and **leads** us on, rather we come to expect it.

I think we often are aware of such moments – a chance encounter, the natural world, events that coincide in a particular way. But we can easily dismiss them as remarkable but happenstance, rather than holding them and allowing them to change us. That is our Epiphany. They may show us things about ourselves – which is often hard – but they also show us the person we could be and long to be. It is not just in the 'happy', good and beautiful but in all things, even the darkest, for 'even darkness is not dark to God'. (Psalm 139). Perhaps we might look to live with greater expectation, paying more attention to those moments and events that sometimes stop us in our tracks. They could be life changing for us.

Yesterday, whilst sorting something out in the bank, the kind assistant wished me a good day and a Happy New Year. What exactly are we saying? So often such phrases are just 'ending words' like the people who bring your food with "There you go." No, I am staying to eat this! Or the people on phone calls who do not know me but who tell me to 'take care' – why would I not? (beginning to rant here, sorry).

I said to him "Why do we say that? His answer was revealing, he smiled "I've no idea". Is it a sort of 'good luck' idea – that if we say it, it may happen? We all know that this year will be much the same as the year before. We cannot wish 'happiness' on others for we cannot bring it to pass.

However, as people of faith, we believe in a world created by God who is present with us. A God who has manifested Godself to us through the natural world, and ultimately and supremely in the Christ.

So, I shall not wish you a Happy New Year but rather a Blessed One, in which we go deeper into that which, is in fact 'beyond understanding', the peace and knowledge of God in our lives, and that we may each live better and may be a blessing to others.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Intercessions

Let us worship the Saviour with joy
and make our prayer to our heavenly Father.

The Magi came from the east to worship your Son:
Father, grant to Christians everywhere
the spirit of adoration.
Lord of glory,
hear our prayer.

The infant Christ received gifts of gold, incense and myrrh:
Father, accept the offering of our hearts and minds
Lord of glory,
hear our prayer.

The kingdoms of this world have become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ:
Father, grant an abundance of peace to your world
especially now when perhaps we have more anxiety than peace.
Lord of glory,
hear our prayer.

The Holy Family lived in exile and in the shadow of death:
Father, look in mercy on all who are poor and powerless,
and all who suffer.

We remember those known to us in need at this time.
And we commit those who have died into your encompassing love
Lord of glory,
hear our prayer.

Your Son shared the life of his home and family at Nazareth:
Father, protect in your love our neighbours,
our families and this community of which we are a part.
Lord of glory,
hear our prayer.

Father, we rejoice in our fellowship
with the shepherds, the angels, the Magi,
the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph
and all the faithful departed.

In your unfailing love for us and for all people,
hear and answer our prayers through your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

May the joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ-child
be yours this Christmas;
and the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you
and remain with you always
Amen.

HYMN

1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free;
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.

3. He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth;
and love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains,
shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow

2. He comes with succour speedy
to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
were precious in his sight.

4. Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing;
To him shall prayer unceasing
And daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing
A kingdom without end.

5 O'er every foe victorious,
He on his throne shall rest
From age to age more glorious,
All-blessing and all-blest
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever;
that name to us is love.