

Sunday Worship at Home, 3rd January, celebrated as Epiphany

Opening Praise:

Today we remember Jesus and the story of his birth; **Jesus is our King.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world; **Jesus is our Way.**

With Jesus even dark places are light; **Jesus is the Truth.**

In Jesus we shall live for ever; **Jesus is our Life.**

A Prayer of 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. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins in penitence and faith firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in and peace with all:

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we are all sinners. We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do. For the sake of Jesus, who died for us, forgive us for all that is past, and help us to live each day in the light of Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A Collect for Epiphany

Creator of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

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

"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."

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

Reflection on the reading:

The Old Testament Lesson for Epiphany is from Isaiah 60 (verses 1-6) in which he prophesies that “darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.” This was fulfilled when wise men from the east (we don’t really know who, how many and where from), guided by a newly formed star arrived in Israel, a land living in the darkness of Roman occupation, to bring gifts and pay homage to Jesus. I think it is significant that only 26 verses into the New Testament, it is Matthews Gospel, which was written for the Jewish people, that tells us some of the very first people to worship Jesus were not Jews but Gentiles, foreigners from another country. It is a sign that Jesus was a gift not for the Jewish nation as a rescue package to save them from the Romans but for all people, everywhere and everywhen. The wise men followed a star; John’s Gospel also begins with light as John tells us Jesus is the light of the world that darkness did not overcome. It still can’t. As we begin a new period of living under the restrictions of COVID tier 4, it seems 2021 will begin somewhat more darkly than other years. But Jesus is the one who came and dwelt with us in our darkness to bring us his light. His light is with us still if, like the wise men, we persevere in seeking him out and hold him tight when we find him – especially if he is the only one we can hold onto for now. **Amen.**

The Creed

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Be still and pray: In your prayers, include prayers for the church, the needs of the world and our local community. Particularly pray for:
Our Prime Minister, the Government and all world leaders they struggle to control COVID-19 and put into place vaccination programmes; For our Government and the EU in our new relationship with Europe; for healing and peace for those who are ill; and for the souls of those who have recently died and comfort for those who are mourning their loss.

Finish with The Lord’s Prayer:

Conclusion

May God the Father, who led the wise men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, the Light from Light, lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit remain with you always. **Amen.**

Remain forever in the light and peace of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Reverend Eddie