



The Epiphany Year B January 6, 2015

Epiphany embodies two journeys. The first is the new vision that the Gospels present of God's grace and love being extended to all people, and not just those descended from Abraham. This inclusivity is radical, scandalous and exciting, and offers a wonderful opportunity for celebration and welcome in our communities. The second journey is that of going deeper into our understanding of Christ – an opening to the epiphany (the insight, the revelation) of who this Christ child is that we have welcomed to our world in the Christmas season. Of course, both journeys are really one, and both offer us an awesome reason for worship and devotion to Jesus.

May our Epiphany worship be both revelatory and welcoming.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Isaiah 60:1-6

This passage is addressed to *Israel*, as the people have been permitted by the Persian King Darius to return to the Holy City Jerusalem. This is a homecoming story, an image of a big party thrown for Israel's return to itself.

Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Paul has been writing in the previous chapter about how both the circumcised and the uncircumcised are now one in Christ, who has broken down the dividing wall. This is the *purpose* of Paul's ministry, to bring the Good News to the Gentiles.

Matthew 2:1-12

The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the infant Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

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 after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

O Lord,
we beseech thee mercifully to receive
the prayers of thy people which call upon thee;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power
faithfully to fulfil the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Almighty and everlasting God,
who dost govern all things in heaven and earth;
Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people,
and grant us thy peace all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Almighty and everlasting God,
Mercifully look upon our infirmities,
and in all our dangers and necessities
stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

O God,
who knowest us to be set
in the midst of so many and great dangers,
that by reason of the frailty of our nature
we cannot always stand upright;
Grant to us such strength and protection,

as may support us in all dangers,
and carry us through all temptations;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

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 our Lord.

and/or

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
Grant to us, who are born of water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
Transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Almighty God,
whose Son revealed in signs and miracles
the wonder of your saving presence:
Renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Creator God,
who in the beginning
commanded the light to shine out of darkness:
We pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,
shine into the hearts of all your people,
and reveal the knowledge of your glory
in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Heavenly Father as the star led the wise men, may the radiance of your presence be a light to our path, that we may come to your presence and walk before you as children of light, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

God, who by the leading of the star brought people from different nations to worship before you, guide all who seek to extend their vision and their lives and to deepen their faith. Grant that your church may be welcoming and sensitive to those looking for meaning and purpose.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

May this church be a sanctuary and support for those who are down-trodden and rejected. We remember especially asylum seekers who are far from home and what is familiar

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for the rulers of nations recovering from war and tyranny and \emerging into new freedoms and awareness, like Iraq. We remember countries coping with the aftermath of great tragedy such as..... We ask for your blessing on relief organizations and for those who care for victims of disaster, famine, floods and drought. We remember those who are homeless, all who are refugees, those who are travelling, and we pray for those mourning family and friends.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Lord, we give you thanks for your presence in our homes. Bless all who through their talents and kindness have enriched our lives.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for friends and loved ones especially any in trouble or need. We pray for any who are living below their potential or abilities, all whose lives are restricted by illness or poverty.

We remember the chronically ill, those in constant pain, the depressed and despairing. May the light of your love give them hope, courage-and consolation and peace.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all who mourn. When bereavement brings pain and grief, help us to remember that we have the promise of eternal life and the hope of glory, that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We commend to your everlasting love those who have died, and light a candle to symbolize our prayers and the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope.

You turn our darkness into light, in your light shall we see light.

Lord, help us trust your truth and your message of peace, that the world may see and understand.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

As we join the wise men from the East and humbly offer gifts at the feet of Jesus, let us offer prayers to God who shows the glory of Christ in all the world.

Deacon or other leader

By the manifestation of the King of the Jews to the shepherds and the magi.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all believers who put their trust in the incarnate Son of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the leaders of the nations and all in authority, and for peace and justice.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the conversion of the whole human race to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For travelers, for the sick and the suffering, for the hungry and the oppressed, for those in prison, and for the dying and the dead.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

God of the stars of night, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast. Fill our hunger with your word of truth and summon all who thirst to the banquet of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 3

The Light of Christ

On this day when peoples from afar came to worship Jesus the Lord, let our prayer be as wide as the world. Let us say to the Father:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That the light of Christ may shine on all nations far and near and that the Church may welcome them with the diversity of their cultures, let us pray to the Lord:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That in our day justice may flourish and peace come to all of the world, let us pray:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That God's people may hear the poor when they cry, have pity on the weak and open their hearts and hands to the needy, let us pray:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That those who persecute the Lord in those who try to follow him may see his light and be converted, let us pray:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That all who look for a star to guide them may discover the goodness of the Lord in people full of faith and love, let us pray:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

That in our Christian communities we may learn, like the wise men, to share the treasures of our goods and hearts, let us pray:

Let the light of Christ shine on all people.

Lord our God, we rejoice that you have become near to us in Jesus your Son. Let him be the light of life now and for ever. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 4

P Father of glory, Your Son has brought the light of life to those who sat in darkness and in death's shadow. Grant Your Church throughout the world boldness to share that good news with all people. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Father of the heavens, the star blazed forth to shine the way to Your incarnate Son. Remember the mission work of Your Church. Help Your people to shine the light of Your Word into the darkness of this world and point the way for all to come home. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P King of all kings, the wise men knelt in awe before the Child upon His mother's lap and offered to Him their gifts. Help all the members of our congregation to join them in their worship and to offer up all we have in service to our Lord. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Lord of the nations, remember in Your kindness all those entrusted with earthly government. Give them wisdom to exercise their authority for the good of those they serve and to the hindrance and punishment of evil. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P All-compassionate Master, in Your never-failing mercy receive the pleas of all who are in need. Remember the imprisoned, those persecuted for the faith, the home-bound, the hospitalized, the lonely and the suffering (*especially . . .*). Shine on them, Lord, the comfort of Your Word, and relieve them in their distress. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Forgiver of every sin, Your Son summons us to feast with Him at the heavenly table He has set for His sisters and brothers upon earth. Grant us faith to receive His true body and blood in a worthy manner. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Immortal King of the Ages, through Your Son You have destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Receive our thanks for the victory over death and the grave that He has promised to all who fall asleep in faith in Him. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P All these things, Holy Father, and whatever else You know that we need, grant us for the sake of Him who brought an everlasting light into this world that has forever shattered the darkness, and who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and ever.

C Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Lord God,
the bright splendour whom the nations seek:
May we, who with the wise men
have been drawn by your light,
discern the glory of your presence in your incarnate Son;
who suffered, died, and was buried,
and who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

and/or

Refreshed by these holy gifts, Lord God,
we seek your mercy:
that by listening faithfully to your only Son,
and being obedient to the prompting of the Spirit,
we may be your children in name and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

God of glory,
you nourish us with bread from heaven.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit

that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

Almighty Father,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
May your people,
illumined by your word and sacraments,
shine with the radiance of his glory,
that he may be known, worshipped,
and obeyed to the ends of the earth;
for he is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

and/or

Generous Lord,
in word and eucharist we have proclaimed
the mystery of your love.
Help us so to live out our days
that we may be signs of your wonders in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

PRAYERS

O God of light and peace,
whose glory, shining in the child of Bethlehem,
still draws the nations to yourself:
dispel the darkness that shrouds our path,
that we may come
to kneel before Christ in true worship,
offer him our hearts and souls,
and return from his presence to live as he has taught. Amen.

God of revelation,
as we gather in praise for the gracious mystery of your Son,
we remember the many needs of your church and your world.
Guide us on the path of salvation, O God,
that the radiance and power of your Holy Spirit
working in the world
will gather together all peoples and nations in one community
to offer you worship and proclaim your splendor. Amen.

Radiant Morning Star,
you are both guidance and mystery,
Visit our rest with disturbing dreams,
and our journeys with strange companions.
Grace us with the hospitality
to open our hearts and homes
to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom
bearing profound and unusual gifts. Amen.

Bright Morning Star,
your light has come,
and the birth of Jesus
has overwhelmed us with joy.
Like the magi of long ago,
may we be drawn to you
and offer you such gifts as we are able. Amen.

NOTES

What Epiphany Means

It is a question from time immemorial: "How can God be known?" The Christian celebration of Epiphany points to the answer.

And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News ([2 Timothy 1:10](#)).

January 6th is Epiphany this year, the day after the twelve-day celebration of Christmas (or, in some liturgical calendars, the twelfth day of the Christmas season). The English word "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means "appearing" or "revealing." Epiphany focuses on God's self-revelation in Christ. On this day, some Christian traditions pay special attention to the visit of the Magi. Other traditions focus on the baptism of Jesus, especially the voice from heaven that identifies Jesus as God's Son. In either case, the emphasis is upon God making himself known to the world through Jesus, the divine Son.

The theological essence of Epiphany is found in [2 Timothy 1:10](#): "And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News." If you were reading this verse in Greek, you'd find the word *epiphaneia* where we have "appearing." God has made "all of this" plain to us through the epiphany of Christ.

But what is "all of this"? We find an answer in the previous verse: "For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus." The original language makes it clear that "all of this" is God's plan (or purpose) and grace. In other words, though Jesus, God not only reveals himself to us, but also reveals his plan to save us, a plan that centers in his grace. The gracious plan of God reflects and confirms his gracious character.

If we want to know God, we must turn our eyes to Jesus. In his words and deeds, and most of all in his sacrificial death, he reveals God to us. On this day of Epiphany, let us thank God for making himself known to us in such a marvelous way. And let us renew our commitment to sharing this good news with the world.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Can you think of some specific attributes of God's character that you have come to know through Jesus? Are there people in your life with whom you might share the good news of God's love in Christ? Are you willing to ask the Lord to use you to communicate his good news to them?

By Dr. Mark D. Roberts -- www.TheHighCalling.org

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Isaiah 60:1-6:

On Epiphany Sunday, we use many light/dark images which correspond to good/bad, and sometimes, unfortunately, white/black. Make sure to double check your language for overtones that may be perceived as racist or convey a message that you don't intend!

"Lift up your eyes and look around." Sometimes things that we need/want/pray for/hope for are right in front of us, we just fail to see them because we are not looking. During [seminary](#), I had the chance to travel to Ghana, West Africa, and walk across high-suspended canopy bridges in Kakum National Park. I had to remind myself to stop, breathe, and look around at the rainforest that I was crossing high above!

This passage is addressed to *Israel*, as the people have been permitted by the Persian King Darius to return to the Holy City Jerusalem. This is a homecoming story, an image of a big party thrown for Israel's return to itself.

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14:

Judgment and Justice - To me the word justice is so powerful because of its double meanings. We want to bring criminals to justice, to make sure they get what they deserve in terms of punishment, but we want to bring the oppressed *justice*, to make sure they get what they deserve: equality, shelter, food, health, etc. I'm reminded of the *Newsboys* song with the lyrics, "When you get what you don't deserve, it's a real good thing . . . when you don't get what you deserve, it's a real good thing." This psalm is written as a sort of call for blessings on a king, perhaps at the beginning of his reign/coronation/special ceremony. In my NRSV translation, some of the phrases sound quite demanding of God. "Give the king your justice, O God." Are we willing to demand of God so boldly when we have wants/needs? When is or isn't this appropriate?

Ephesians 3:1-12:

"This is the reason": Paul has been writing in the previous chapter about how both the circumcised and the uncircumcised are now one in Christ, who has broken down the dividing wall. This is the *purpose* of Paul's ministry, to bring the Good News to the Gentiles. "Although I am the very least of all the saints." When I was younger, before I came to better terms with my good friend Paul, these statements of self-debasing always irritated me to no end! :) "Mystery", from the Greek *musterion*, a secret thing or secret rite. Not so much in a 'whodunnit' sense, but in an awe and intrigue sense.

Matthew 2:1-12:

Matthew emphasizes the importance of this event because the visit of the Magi (the Latin term) symbolizes recognition from non-Jewish figures of prominence who recognize the kingship of baby Jesus. Note that there is no mention of 3 Kings. A lot of common thought about the wise men is something of Bible mythology, such as their number, their names (traditionally Balthasar, Caspar, and Melchior), and their royal status. Of course, the wise men would not have arrived at the birth of the Christ child, as depicted in nativity scenes, but well after the birth, hence Herod's decision to kill male babies of two and under, to make sure the job was done. What makes this story of the wise men the day of Epiphany? Writes Dennis Bratcher in [this](#) article, "The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the infant Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ."

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The Festival of Epiphany reveals to us who this Christ is that has incarnated himself among us. There are two clear revelations that would have been startling for the first readers of Matthew's Gospel. The first is that the Messiah has come inclusively – for all people: Jew AND Gentile, Wealthy AND Poor, Oppressed AND Oppressor. This inclusivity is a significant aspect of the scandal of the Gospel. The second revelation is the mind-bending truth that has traditionally been seen as reflected in the Wise Men's gifts: This Child is Royalty (gold), Divinity (frankincense), and yet, also, self-giving Sacrifice (myrrh). All of these passages call us into praise for God's inclusive incarnation!

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Defensiveness and otherness are two of the main characteristics of today's political, social, economic and relational world. In the quest for self-development, human beings have increasingly seen their individual selves as distinct from and "other than" other people. Businesses work hard to "distinguish" themselves from their competitors and even nations work hard to identify themselves, drawing boundaries, naming enemies and allies, and putting huge investments into defending what is "uniquely theirs". Epiphany, scandalously reveals that Christ crosses all of these boundaries, refusing to be defensive or self-protective, and refusing to draw lines of separation. This incarnate Messiah draws all creation together into one, and gives up his own safety, security and comfort in order to do it.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Every church community, and every person, longs for the light of God's glory and blessing to shine on them. This longing often leads us into trying to earn God's blessing through legalism, doctrinal purity or separation from those who are considered "unrighteous". Too often faith becomes something exclusive, something to defend against others who see things differently. Epiphany reveals an alternative view of God's glory – that in Christ's incarnation God's glory and blessing are already ours – not something to earn; and that the experience of God's glory is found in connection and sharing with others, while protecting and defending the least. It is a good discipline to ask: "Who needs to be included in our community right now?" and "Who needs to be protected?" – two questions that necessarily call us to emulate Christ's self-sacrifice in our own lives.

SERMON OUTLINE

Best and Worst

Isaiah 60, 1-9, Matthew 2, 1-18

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” With those words, Charles Dickens begins his epic novel, “A Tale of Two Cities.” Such words find a powerful echo in our Gospel Reading this morning.

For the best of times, we are able to look to the story of the magi. Just 6 days ago, our thoughts were on Jesus in the manger. Then we found him visited by shepherds, men of little status whose working lives were such that they lacked the ritual cleanliness to be fully participating members of Israel’s religious life which meant in effect being outsiders.

Now we meet another group of outsiders, the mysterious magi. We do not know when Matthew sees them as coming to visit Jesus. Often it is noted that they visit Jesus in a house as though this puts a considerable difference between the time of their visit and the earlier visit of the shepherds. However, this is not necessarily so. The Greek word that is often translated as “inn” in terms of no room at the inn, is “kataluma” which is only used elsewhere by Luke to refer to the arrangements for the upper room whilst in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke uses a different word for a commercial inn. Given that most basic homes were one room homes with a lower level for animals who could reach up to a manger at the family living level, there is good reason to believe that Jesus was born in the main section of a home of relatives whilst the kataluma or spare room was already occupied. If so, the two visitations need not be far apart.

But what of these magi? Their visit fits an Eastern pattern of great births being accompanied by momentous events in the sky. Certainly we know of a comet in 11BCE in Gemini with its head towards Leo, seen by many as a symbol of Judah, which may have heightened messianic expectations. We also know of planetary conjunctions in both 7BCE and 6 BCE which would have added to a sense that momentous happenings were on the way. Magi from present day Iran or Iraq would have noticed these things and taken them seriously. But who were they?

One commentator, Brian Stoffregen puts it like this;

“Originally in Persia, Magi were dream- interpreters. By Jesus’ time, the term referred to astronomers, fortune-tellers, or star-gazers. In fact our word “magic” or “magician” comes from the word Magi. They were horoscope fanatics - a practice condemned by Jewish standards. We might compare them to people in fortune - teller booths, or people on the “psychic hotline” or other “occupations” that fore-tell the future by stars, tea leaves, Tarot cards etc.

They were magicians, astronomers, star-gazers, pseudo-scientists, fortune tellers..”

Another writer, Nathan Nettleton, puts it like this;

“They were the speakers of the sacred words at the pagan sacrifices. At worst, the term referred to a magician or sorcerer, or even a deceiver. Magi were people whose activities were repeatedly condemned and prohibited throughout the scriptures and were completely anathema to the people of Israel.”

Do you get the picture? These Magi were not just foreigners which to some would be bad enough. They were also those whose religious practices were far removed from those of Israel. God’s blessings are seen to be for even the most unlikely of people. For this Christ has come to demonstrate God’s love for all.

But can we learn from these Magi? I think we can. Part of my upbringing was in a religious context in which you almost feared being unorthodox. God might not like it. And yet, there are times when I find myself uncomfortable with the sort of religious expression that claims to have it all. Bono and U2 were castigated some years ago by some supposedly orthodox Christians when they produced a song entitled, “ I still haven’t found what I am looking for.” I can’t see the problem with that especially given the spiritual depths in many of their songs. You see, the example of the Magi was that they were searchers. They didn’t claim to have it all but they saw their lives as a journey of discovery. And in that they are an example to us. We don’t know it all. But if we like them are prepared to be diligent seekers, then like them we may be graced by a vision of God’s light, by our Epiphany. So a message for today, is to dare like them to take the risk of seeking and God may well bless us with our own Epiphany which transform us as doubtless the Magi were transformed by what must have been a surprising experience for them as they knelt before the infant Jesus.

And what of those gifts. Gold, frankincense and myrrh - hardly ideal gifts for a baby although my father tells me that he was enrolled in a “Funeral club” within days of being born. Of course, gold points us to Kingship, frankincense to priesthood and myrrh to suffering and death. But there is another understanding that is worth considering. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were used by Persian magicians as elements in their practices. Taken this way, the gifts become infinitely more sacrificial for they can be seen as representing a surrender of old ways and old understandings as they embrace the new

revelation that has come to them in Christ. Now they become a challenge to us. A challenge that asks of us if we are using our gifts in a way that conflicts with the way of Christ and if so are we like the wise men prepared to bring those gifts to Christ.

Well, the wise men are part of the good side of Christmas. And yet there is a shadow side. And that shadow side is to be found in Herod the Great. Although as an Idumean he was not a pure Jew and his relationship with his people was difficult, he might have been expected to be one of the stars of the story. And yet like so many rulers, when feeling threatened, he had a tendency to lash out with cruelty and brutality. Even his own family experienced this. Not for nothing was it said that it was safer to be Herod's pig than his Son. Later to effect mass mourning on his death, he prepared massive executions to coincide with his passing.

Herod reminds us of the dangers of power being used for domination. For we know that too often, people have to die for the fears, ambitions and vanities of leaders. How often have people been seen as expendable just as Matthew presents the infants of Bethlehem as being expendable in the sight of Herod. Herod's violence is unleashed with brutality. And in that we see something of an ongoing human story. For as American Methodist theologian Walter Wink has written, the dominant myth today is not the official stories of any of the world's great faiths but the pagan rooted myth of the redemptive value of violence. A myth which has destructive outworkings, a myth which perhaps lies at the heart of yesterday's snuff video (I'd call it pornographic) where the solution to a violent man is seen as public violence and so as has always been the case, this myth, Herod's myth leads on to ever increasing circles of hatred and violence.

Follow Jesus and see the contrast between him and Herod;

- A contrast between non violence as opposed to violence
- A Valuing of all however undeserving as opposed to valuing only those who are useful to Number 1
- A courageous compassion as opposed to a destructive rage.

Soon the Holy Family will have to flee. Soon they will become refugees in need of asylum, a journey followed by so many in the 2 millenia that will follow. For the life of Jesus like that of the rest of humanity will be no fairytale but will interact all too powerfully with the forces of darkness.

But this morning whilst we must move into being realistic about our world in which power is so often used to squash others, we can indeed encounter hope. For in Christ, God's light has entered the world. Darkness cannot put it out. And we are called to live every day as signs of the Light even when it puts us a million miles away from the tyranny of the majority and the drumbeat of conformity.

The best and the worst. The worst is all too real but the best is greater and at Epiphany we can celebrate that the all embracing love of Christ, the Light of the world, that is the most powerful force of all, greater than any of the man made abominations that are weapons of mass destruction.

By Paul Martin

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

A story of two kings - By the Rev. Elizabeth Easton of the Episcopal Church

Scroll down - <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/01/?cat=7>

"The Main Thing," the Rev. Randy Calvo, *Day 1*,
http://day1.org/1076-the_main_thing

"Discovering Your Own Gifts for the Christchild," "Exploding Light," "Shooting Stars," "Where Did Christmas Go?" Pastor Edward F. Markquart, Grace Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington.
http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/series_c_discovering.htm

The story of the other Wise Man -
Abridged for pulpit use...

<http://www.wikipreacher.org/home/quotations-and-illustrations/-c/christmas/the-story-of-the-other-wise-man>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/year-c-epiphany-january-6-2013.html), Epiphany, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/11/year-c-epiphany-january-6-2013.html>

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

Talks2children

There are three talks for Epiphany here -

<http://talks2children.wordpress.com/category/epiphany/>

"What Is Concealed Now Is Revealed," Anna's Hosannas

<http://annashosannas.net/Children%5C%27s-Lessons-Epiphany-B.php>

Scripture Reference: Matthew 2: 1-12

First Thoughts: This lesson focuses on the nature of revelation, to suddenly “see” something that was once concealed from you. As the leader preparing this lesson, I encourage you to think of times in your own life when things seemed muddy or confusing, but then – like the sun breaking through the clouds – suddenly everything became clear to you. How did you experience the breakthrough – a sudden shifting of feeling, a lightening in your body, a liberating and new thought? This is the experience we want to help our kids tap into, and to watch for, in their growing relationship with God.

"Following the Season" (Scripture reference Ecclesiastes 3:1-13)

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HYMN SUGGESTIONS

See list at **Oremus Hymnal Epiphany** -

<http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/epiphany.html>

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title