

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, December 31st, 2023, Epiphany
Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12

We tend to think of the beginning as advent and the beginning of the church as Pentecost. This may be so, but epiphany is a new beginning, a new chapter in the story.

This is twofold. The Magi coming from the east signify the message open for all not just one specific group. And the message and the gifts given to the Christ child are also given to us.

The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh given to the Christ Child show more about his role going forward than as gifts to a child. And the gifts given to Jesus are by extension given to us. The gold given to a king represents the king's role as one of gathering the kin or the family together. Frankincense, prayers, that we are a people of prayer. This gift is not given to suggest we put on spirituality and prayer, but we are created as spiritual beings. And myrrh, that there is an element of sacrifice in living out the other two gifts.

This is all well and good, but how do we live out those gifts? They are so broad where do we start?

Isaiah talks about the light in the darkness. The light leading the way. Then the question where is the light leading us? We come into the light, asking the question how do I live out receiving the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh? Or are the choices I make do not take me in that direction?

On Christmas Eve, we heard about the shepherds coming to see the Christ child, and today we hear about the Magi doing almost the same thing. I talked a little bit about the traveling on Christmas Eve and finding a place to be in the presence of God or at least a place of peace and quiet, and the travelling is a state of mind.

I long time ago I had a spiritual director who, when I mentioned going to the trailer we had for a time of rest and relaxation, he suggested taking the time to do nothing, take no book or writing material, but just be. I tried but then found paper and a pen to journal. So, I could not go the whole time without a form of distraction.

I could not just be alone with myself and my thoughts. We might be better at doing this and just being after the isolation from the covid epidemic, but still, it is not easy

for us to receive the gift of ourselves God has given us. To just be alone, and alone in the presence of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. But why is this necessary?

Yes, we might naturally fall into the pattern of living out the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh God has given to us, but we may need to spend time getting in touch with these gifts within us. And this may be difficult as well because we tend to focus on our mistakes and our shortcomings rather than the talents and blessings, we have to offer the community.

Our Homiletics professor was an after-dinner speaker at an event. He lamented that some coming to him for confession, (yes, we have private confession available in the Anglican Church,) would neurotically confess the same fault time after time. He then asked that for the next time they came for confession, they confess three things they liked, or felt good about themselves before confessing their shortcomings.

Is there a message in this for us today as we celebrate Epiphany?

Amen

Go forth to sing God's good news to others.
Go forth knowing
that you do not lack anything you need
to be a servant saint of God.
Go forth to be that servant for others.
You have met God revealed in unexpected places.
Go forth to reveal God to others.
And may the God of timeless gifts,
surprises and revelations
go with you on your journey. **Amen.**