

Let us pray... God of wonder, you are holy. Create a space for holiness in our lives. Usher your Spirit in our midst. Infuse your loving presence in our hearts, calm our minds, and bring us peace. Amen.

Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas Season, the 12th day of Christmas if you will... With a story that often gets muddled in the minds of Christmas stories and Christmas carols, placing the 3 wise men or the 3 kings with Jesus on the night he was born...

However, the gospel of Matthew tells a different story... A story about the Magi, which is often poorly translated as wise men... and which is even more confused of as kings...

But the Magi were something unique to antiquity... And a more proper translation of Magi would actually be... astrologers...

As they were well versed in the natural ways of creation and they used their teachings to interpret signs that happened in nature, and what they meant for the world... And hence, we get the term "wise men" because they were wise to the natural world.

The Magi were also gentiles and they came from the East, meaning they were not Jewish and that they were foreigners... And being foreigners and having a long way to travel, entails a long journey... A journey that took weeks and possibly even months...

And so, begins this unique passage for Epiphany... Where we hear about foreign astrologers, not familiar with Hebrew Scripture... Who are late for the actual birth of Christ...

And who set out all because they saw a star, and decided to follow that star only to discover the Word of God made flesh...

Which is a pretty accurate description of what Epiphany is meant to entail... As Epiphany is all about discovery... And the Greek translation for epiphany means manifestation...

Specifically, the manifestation of God becoming flesh to all of the world...

Which could only be possible, if Jesus was made known to all people, not just those of Jewish faith and the local population.

And so, we need the unique background of the Magi to make all of this possible, bringing the good news of Christ to all the nations...

Who thanks to their astrological knowledge found and followed a star which revealed God living among us...

And once the Magi saw this, once they fulfilled what they had set out for... The star is no longer mentioned in the story.

In fact, we are told that they left for their own country by way of another road...

The Magi no longer needed the star to guide them, for they had seen the true light of Christ... and it became a part of them...

Christ's light lived in them, guided them, and radiated from them...

But the Magi are not the only ones who have been filled with Christ's light...

You have been united with Christ in your baptismal waters, a sacred space where you received the light of Christ...

And as a symbol of that light, you were given a candle at your baptism...

A candle that reminds you that Christ's light lives in you.

Which comes full circle to today, as I had mentioned at the start of the service, today is one of those unique days in the church year...

Where churches can either celebrate Epiphany or the Baptism of our Lord...

Because it is in baptism, that Epiphany manifests in us.

In baptism we receive the light of Christ... Light, like the Magi first received on the night of Epiphany so many years ago.

And the light of Christ does more than just shine in the darkness.... The light of Christ reveals who you are... And whose you are.

You are a child of God.

Which is an amazing thing... But that doesn't mean that life is going to be easy, without heartbreak, disappointment, and pain.

Instead, being a child of God means that we have an eternal Creator who is with us in all of life's moments... And who is with us even in death...

Being a child of God means that you are loved.... And you are invited to share that love with one another... Through good times, bad times, and everything in between.

Being a child of God means that you always have a light to follow... Even when all the world seems dark around you. Even in your longing, your struggles, and your fears.

Because nothing can overcome the light of the world. This light shines in your heart and it shines through the darkness...

It is always inside of you... Even when it feels like the light has gone out... It hasn't... It might just be tucked away... Like the lantern in the children's sermon, you just need to open it up...

Which can be hard to do... Which is why we have each other, to open up that space, and to hold each other in grace... Like we did on Christmas Eve, passing the light of Christ from one person to the next until this space glowed in gorgeous light...

As it is together, as children of God, where we find the light of Christ. The only light that shines through the darkness...Amen.