

Epiphany of Our Lord

January 6, 2025 (Year C)



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Now the Wise Men had the faith to follow the word of the Prophet Micah. They were not offended that the king was not born in Jerusalem. They left the Temple and went to the cow stall ...
Here the Evangelist shows us the true nature of faith,
how they believed simply what they had not
seen and held fast to the word.

– Martin Luther–
Christmas Book

Isaiah 60:1–6

Epiphany is the season of light. Light is an often used metaphor for spiritual knowledge and truth, whereas darkness is just the opposite. The Messiah was promised to come to bring truth and understanding to a world that is in spiritual darkness. Though these words were written around the eighth century BC, we still live in a world today that is ignorant or complacent to the ways and means of God. That, however, does not change the reality that God is with us always in Christ Jesus — even in the darkness.

- *In what sense does the image of darkness symbolize our separation from God, while light represents being in the presence of God?*

The Hebrew words for “darkness” are *hoshek* and *arapel*. *Hoshek* signifies a lack of light, like what we experience at night. The word *arapel* suggests a deeper gloom and experience of misery — like walking through a thick cloud. The prophet used both words in this passage to convey the darkness that shadows the earth and its inhabitants.

- *How have you experienced a lack of light and a thick cloud cover in your own life of faith? How was the darkness dispersed?*

The good news that we often miss is that God is fully present in the darkness as well as in the light (see Psalm 97:2, 1 Kings 8:12, Deuteronomy 5:22–23). God promised his people that he would dwell with them in the deep darkness. Light is coming into the world to illuminate the world, but darkness is still nothing to fear for those who trust God.

- *In what ways does Christ meet us in the darkness? At what times was Jesus himself most surrounded by darkness?*

Isaiah calls Israel to “arise” and “shine” as the glory and power of the Lord are made manifest to all nations. People from far off will see this light and it will draw them together with God’s people. There will be a new hope and a renewed understanding of the Lord’s will.

- *If God was already present in the darkness, then why did he need to send the Light of Jesus? How did/does Jesus draw all nations into the light of God?*

Psalms 72:1–11 (12–15)

This psalm is attributed to King Solomon, who asked the Lord for the wisdom and discernment to be able to faithfully rule the people of God (2 Chronicles 1:7–13). Here in this psalm, Solomon expressed his desire to tend to the poor and oppressed, and to provide for those in need. This

is true humility on Solomon’s part, recognizing that on his own, he could not lead his people purely and honorably. He needed the help of the Lord. He prayed that God would take over and use him as His instrument for ruling the people.

- *What might the world be like if those who were in power prayed a prayer like this one each day?*
- *What if we prayed this prayer daily in our own lives? In what ways might God use you this week as his instrument?*

Ephesians 3:1–12

In our lives there are certain things that we are called to “administer” and be in charge of. These may be different for each of us according to our calling and circumstance. Teachers facilitate learning and administer tests, doctors examine patients and administer remedies. Vaccines are administered on medical mission trips, local governments administer regulations about all sorts of things in their communities. In each instance the act of administration is a duty and an honor.

- *In what ways does the task of administration require fidelity and perseverance?*

Paul says that it was his call to administer God’s grace to the Gentile people. The ESV translates verse 1, “the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me, for you.” Imagine the responsibility! To be the one called to care for the Gentiles and to ensure they heard the gospel message would have been a daunting (yet joyful) task.

- *In what ways are all the baptized charged with the administration of the gospel message? How are we “stewards” of God’s grace to the world?*

Matthew 2:1–12

In modern religious language, sometimes people speak of faith as “coming to Christ.” We might wonder about the magi who sought after the Messiah: did their visit cause them to “come to Christ” in faith? They certainly “came to Christ” in a physical sense. They traveled over the country to find him, met a hostile Jewish king along the way, and knelt down to Jesus when they finally found him. But we have no record of their lives after that encounter, or what impact this visit may have had on them.

- *Is the intellectual interest of a spiritual “seeker” the same thing as faith? Why or why not?*
- *In what sense did God first come to the Magi, before they ever sought him. How is the same true for us in our lives of faith?*