

## Feast of the Epiphany January 4, 2009

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

### Aha

Today is the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. Epiphany; we hear the word every year at this time, but do we stop and wonder what it means. Epiphany means a manifestation or revelation; for us it can be like an “aha” moment. And so the Epiphany of the Lord is God revealing Himself and making Himself known to us. And when we think of this official feast of the Epiphany we recall the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi, the Three Kings who followed the star to Bethlehem. By this time, Jesus was no longer living in the stable; we hear in today’s gospel: **“They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.”** He may have been 3-6 months old by now. By this time Jesus had already been revealed to the Jews. He was revealed to Mary and Joseph, of course, by visiting angels. He was revealed to the shepherds as they tended their flocks. He was revealed to Simeon and Anna when He was brought to the temple for His presentation that we heard about last week in the gospel reading. They certainly had “aha” moments. He was also revealed to the priests and scribes, those who studied scripture and its prophecies, but they did not recognize the signs that God gave them. The baby Jesus was revealed to the Jewish leaders but they did not have “aha” moments. It took the Magi, Gentile astrologers, to read the signs in the heavens. They came a great distance to honor Him and celebrate His birth. Where were the Jewish leaders all this time.

We are the Gentiles, the non-Jews, and so God’s revelation of the newborn King to the Magi is very significant for us. The Jews who did recognize Jesus were the humble ones: Mary, Joseph, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna. The scribes and priests, the church leadership, did not recognize the signs from scripture at His birth, during His ministry, or at His death.

This evening Jenni and I will be showing a video in the church hall entitled “The Star of Bethlehem”. It is a fascinating video that Jenni heard about and just picked up last week. I wish we knew about it sooner to give everyone more time for planning, but hopefully some of you will be able to come back this evening to see it. Using recently developed technology and a fresh look at scriptures, the video clearly depicts how the stars that would have been present in the night sky 2000 years ago follow the prophecies from the Old Testament. The Jewish leaders knew the prophecies, but were too blind to see their fulfillment. They did not have an “aha” moment. They did not have a manifestation, an epiphany, of the Lord.

God could have performed a different kind of miracle back 2000 years ago. He could have created a new large, bright star and had it move across the sky and stop over Bethlehem to announce the birth of our Savior, and then made it disappear. But from the findings presented in this video, it appears that God may have revealed Jesus to us through an even more awesome way using the wonders of the creation He already had set in place at the beginning of time. For all the stars and planets to line up the way they did is not something that could have been predicted, but it turns out they were following

natural physical laws that God established long ago. God had set the stars and planets in motion and knew where each one would be, and the Holy Spirit told the prophets what to say and write. The revelation of Jesus to us through the Magi was a well orchestrated plan by God. The complexity of our world is so great it overwhelms us. It is a miracle in itself, and God reveals Himself to us each day if we simply stop and reflect on the wonders of the world around us.

But do we get too busy and caught up with our lives that we fail to notice God's presence. We don't have to get all caught up studying the stars and chasing after prophecies. But we should be humble and attentive and willing to listen like the shepherds, like Mary and Joseph, and like Simeon and Anna. God speaks to us and reveals Himself to us every day, but do we listen, do we allow ourselves to have "aha" moments? If Jesus came again and was walking down the street, would we recognize Him, would we take the time to stop and listen to Him? Or, would we be too busy?

We do not have prophecies predicting when Jesus will return. Jesus said: **"Be alert! You do not know when the time will come."** (Mk. 13:33) We do not know when the time that Jesus will come again or when He will call us from this earth, so we must be ready, alert, and prepared at all times. Watch for signs that indicate He is present among us revealing Himself at all times. Pray and conduct yourself as He has commanded and you will have "aha" moments of your own.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**