

Sermon for Epiphany Day January 6, 2021

Today is the day of Epiphany. The last day of our 12-day Christmas season. In some places around the world parades **(Image)**, religious ceremonies, and big parties happen on the eve of Epiphany, and on the day of Epiphany, as we celebrate the adoration of Jesus given by the Magi from the East. As we celebrate Jesus being identified as our Messiah, through the guiding light of a star **(Image)**, and through the Magi's royal gifts **(Image)**.

We are encouraged as Christians to recognize this day and celebrate Christ our messiah and our king. We are encouraged as Christians to celebrate the whole Christmas season, not just Christmas day.

Unfortunately, many of us within the Christian tradition have struggled to balance the secular celebrations of Xmas with our traditional Christian celebrations of Christmas. We put a lot of emphasis on Christmas Eve service where we meet Jesus our saviour at the manger, but also, we put a lot of emphasize on Santa's big arrival. Sometimes Santa takes on a bigger role than we want Santa to take on, on Christmas Eve.

To a lesser extent we emphasize Christmas Day service where we hear the testimony of John about Jesus being our light in our world, but also, we emphasize the opening up of all the presents we receive, and eating those delicious Turkey dinners. If we were being honest with ourselves, for most of us, the presents and the dinners have taken more of our attention on Christmas Day than John's testimony.

The day after Christmas Day many of us start to focus on our New Years resolutions and are more than ready to move on from Christmas. The stores offer their big boxing day sales the week after Christmas day **(Image)**. Taking away our focus on Christmas being a Christmas season. Especially, when most stores have stopped playing Christmas music right after Christmas day, and are practically giving away the remaining Christmas decor.

Plus, it doesn't help that Christmas decorations and music have been in the stores since November. This can easily lead to us experiencing a little Christmas fatigue that seems to set in right after Christmas Day. So, we

turn our focus to the big New Years parties (**Image**). And the stresses of having to go back to work and school.

I have to admit that I didn't grow up in a church that emphasized the day of Epiphany as much as they do in other countries around the world. As a Pastor I have not celebrated the day of Epiphany in the same way I have celebrated Christmas Eve/Christmas Day. Most years we have dedicated the first Sunday after the 6th to recognize Epiphany. But, celebrating Epiphany in this way becomes more of an after thought. Once in a while, Epiphany actually lands on a Sunday, so, on these years we may make a bigger deal about Epiphany. Yet, even when Epiphany does land on Sunday, we don't gather on the eve of Epiphany in the same way we gather on the eve of Christmas.

What happens when we miss out on this tradition, or treat it like an after thought is that we miss out on hearing the second Christmas story in our gospels. The story that gives us a picture of what happens after the manger scene. The story that talks about Gentiles coming from the East to celebrate the birth of the Messiah. Reflecting the message that Jesus is born for all people. Poor shepherds, the animals, and even the Gentiles.

When the star leads the Magi from distant lands to where Jesus is, we are connected to an Old Testament prophecy that states that Gentiles would be led to the Messiah by a star. Then the gifts that the Magi bring to Jesus carry with them messianic promise as well. Gold, myrrh, and Frankincense. Gifts fit for a king. The star and these gifts identify Jesus as the messiah. The one who will set us free.

Now, this story isn't all about shining stars, extravagant gifts, and well-dressed Magi. Unfortunately, this story comes with tragedy as well. From Herod wanting to kill the messiah. To acts of genocide. To refugee resettlement. It might be one reason why we often times gloss over this story. Or we take out the nice parts and integrate them into Luke's story. Placing the Magi at the manger along with the shepherds.

Well, as I preached at the beginning of our Christmas season, the Christmas messages we hear in both Luke and Matthew come with its joys and with its sorrows. Or in other words, the Christmas joy is a joy we experience in the midst of living in a broken world.

With that being said, Matthew retells this story to bring us hope and joy in the midst of our brokenness. To reveal Christ as the messiah who has come for all people. The Gentiles are now included in God's plan for the world.

This is indeed a day to celebrate. This is indeed a day that shouldn't be an after thought, but treated with as much significance as the first day of Christmas. If you are interested in learning more about how you can celebrate this day then I encourage you to google search "ways to celebrate Epiphany". You will find neat things you can do to keep this day as holy as the first day of our Christmas season. Like making a Three Kings Cake (**Image**) or dressing up as the wisemen, and going door to door singing, while holding a star. Of course, making the cakes may be an easier way to celebrate Epiphany during this pandemic.

I encourage you to do something today to mark the 12th day of Christmas, the day where Gentiles gather at the home of Jesus to celebrate his messianic calling. It is a great day indeed. It is worthy of our praise and our adoration. As Jesus has come into our world to rule us with love and hospitality. Jesus has come into our world to heal us and redeem us. Jesus has come into our world to set us free from sin and death. Jesus has come into our world to bring justice and peace. Merry Epiphany.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for Christ our messiah who sets us free from sin and death. Who reconciles us with you. We give thanks for the twelve days of Christmas. Especially the day of Epiphany where you reassure us like the first day of Christmas, that your promise of healing and redemption indeed is being fulfilled through your Son. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen**.

© copyright, 2021, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.