

Epiphany 2021 Zoom Sermon

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So here we are after a very strange and difficult year entering into a New Year and the feast of the Epiphany once again. Epiphany is a time of looking outwards as we remember how God sent his Son to the whole world. All three of our readings today point to this. Isaiah speaks of the light to which the nations will come in spite of the darkness that covers the earth. *Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.* Isaiah also speaks of the gifts to be showered upon the subject of this passage, not least, *'A multitude of camels shall cover you.'* One's imagination can run riot with that I think! St Paul talks of how the mystery, formerly not made known to humankind, has now been revealed to the prophets and holy apostles by the Spirit, and that the Gentiles have now become fellow heirs and sharers in the promise of Christ through the gospel.

In Matthew's gospel we hear about the wisemen who have come far from the East following the star to find the King they have seen as prophesied in Micah 5.2. They were men of learning and well-read even of the Jewish scriptures. They are following this star that was out of the ordinary, at a time when the weather could be harsh at the high altitudes that they would have had to cross at great risk. It is thought that they probably came from Iraq, Iran or Turkey. The truth is we know very little about them except that they were foreigners from far off lands. They bring gifts that signify the great importance of the child they are visiting. But these are material gifts; God has given us so much more in this Child.

St Paul experienced God's revelation of his purpose at his conversion. He speaks repeatedly of the 'grace' which God gives in abundance through his appearance or epiphany to all peoples. The Star of Bethlehem was another such revelation that made a statement. He has sent his love down to the whole world through his son, not just to a few people in a small nation called Israel. This is great news. As we enter a new year after what has probably been for us all one of the hardest and strangest of our lives, let us enter it with hope in our hearts, not only the hope that the new vaccines bring, but the hope that comes with the birth of the Christ Child and the Epiphany. God's love is for the whole of this disease torn world, not an exclusive few. In the words of Christina Rossetti, *"Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, love divine; Love was born at Christmas; Star and angels gave the sign."* Let us show that we have seen that sign and take that love and hope out with us as we enter 2021. We have a gospel message that needs to be revealed in all we do or say. There is hope for our suffering world. The hope that comes with God's bountiful love.
AMEN