

Epiphany, Year A

- The prophet Isaiah says to us tonight, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.”
- Epiphany is about light
- It’s not that we haven’t already been hearing about light – John’s prologue, after all, talks about John the Baptist testifying to the light, and how the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it
- But if Christmas is a star shining in the night, then the Epiphany is about the breaking light of day, just peeking out over the horizon, beginning to illuminate more and more of God’s good earth
- Christ is born at Christmas, but is revealed at the Epiphany and its miracles
- Miracles like the Magi, representatives of the Gentiles, all the nations, who come to pay homage to Christ, the Rising Son of God
- Their presence to recognize and honor the infant Christ foreshadows the extension of God’s grace, God’s love, God’s unquenchable light – being shed on all the world, illuminating everything it touches
- Extending not only to those people historically chosen of God, but widening – brightening the circle of God’s light, throughout the world, even to the Gentiles and the nations
- A light so bright it shines across time, across the centuries and to all of us
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- And of those magi, we’re told they were overwhelmed with joy, and they knelt down and paid him homage.
- “Opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”
- Epiphany is about grace – the generosity of God, being made flesh for our sake
- And our response to grace, the response of gratitude and generosity first modeled by the magi bringing gifts – three gifts meant to honor the infant King of Angels and King of Kings
- The first gift of gold – a solid metal that glitters with light – a metal of exceeding value, meant to show just how rich a gift the Christ child is – a gift fit for a king
- Frankincense – the incense used in worship since ancient times, in hopes that the words of our prayers might mingle with the smoke of the incense and rise all the way to heaven, from our lips to God’s ears
- And of course, myrrh – a perfume, used in anointing oil – most especially the oil used for

anointing the bodies of the dead in the Ancient Near East – a reminder that Christ was born for a purpose, and that purpose has a cost – a reminder that the child we greet this happy evening is willing to suffer for our sake – to die so that we might live

- What gifts do we bring to honor Christ?
- What offerings can we bring, to honor such a gift?
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- And then, in the Psalm we hear this plea: “May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.”
- Epiphany is about the absolute sovereignty of God
- About seeing who God is, in all God’s glory, and in all Christ’s humility
- And realizing that all other kings, all other leaders, all other allegiances, pale in comparison
- Tonight we see that there is only one master whom we must serve, and it is the one who leads us by joining us here in the midst of his creation, by walking with us on his world
- Tonight, this feast of the Epiphany, is about the Glory of God
- Tonight is about a great gift, too – not the gifts of the magi, but the gift of God’s grace, the forgiveness of all that has gone awry in creation, forgotten in a moment based on the value of his Son, our God made flesh
- The mercy of God sharing God’s own life with us so that we need not fear death
- The invaluable gift of knowing that God who makes us will also sustain us, that God is the star that guides and the destination that star guides us too
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- Tonight is about light – about a star that at first seems so small, a pinprick of light in the darkness
- A star we’re told to follow – and as we do, that star, that light, gets brighter and brighter, revealing more and more of God’s glory, more and more of God’s grace
- Until eventually, the whole world glows in its light