

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany
Year C, RCL
Grace Episcopal Church
January 19, 2025

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

After he was baptized, Jesus recruited some students and told them he'd teach them about the kingdom of God. And then Jesus and his new mates went to a party. They went to a wedding party, with family and friends, and an excited young couple . . . and plenty of wine; even toward the end there, some pretty good wine. Years later, people remembered that party, and they remembered that Jesus performed his first miracle at that party. John called it his first "sign." John also wrote that Jesus "revealed his glory" at that party. And there's our connection, our Epiphany connection. At Cana, at the wedding party, Jesus revealed his glory.

Those family members and friends, and that young couple, and those students—everybody at the party was offered the opportunity to have their own epiphany, their own flash of insight into the identity of this rabbi, this Jesus who was new on the scene and about whom people were beginning to talk. And because some of those people took advantage of the opportunity, some of them noticed the mystery in the midst of the mundane, we also are offered that same opportunity today, here, and now. The season of Epiphany is the time when we are offered the opportunity to glimpse the true identity of Jesus, the season during which, if we're paying attention, we might have our own epiphanies.

During these few weeks after Christmas we're all hunkered down, because of the weather mostly, but maybe also because it's the beginning of a new year, a time to "draw inward," to take stock of last year and doing some planning for 2025. The days are still short and dark, and we're just now getting out from underneath the season's first big ice and snow storm. This past week, on one of those cold snowy mornings, I pictured all of us around town, getting up early in the dark, with just a few lights on, and going down to the kitchen and making coffee. And over here, on the counter, is our Aura Frame. An Aura Frame is one of those gadgets that displays the pictures from cell phones. They allow us to scroll through and re-enjoy our recent best memories, maybe our travels with family and friends over the Christmas holidays.

There's a sense in which the season of Epiphany is like one of those Aura Frames. During this season we get several Sundays to glimpse "snapshots" of Jesus revealed as the Son of God. The season is all about the realization that Jesus is someone different from the rest of us, somebody to pay attention to and maybe follow. We've already seen a couple of "pictures" or revelations this season. Two weeks ago, on the feast day of the Epiphany, we thought again about the Wise Men, those visiting foreign dignitaries who dropped in on a little family and paid the young boy Jesus the kind of respect and honor that's only given to royalty, to kings, to the great and powerful.

Last week we saw another snapshot. Right after Jesus was baptized, a voice came from heaven and declared to him that he is the one who enjoys divine favor. He's God's Son, and God is proud of his boy. Two pics on our Epiphany Frame, glimpses of the divinity of Christ. They were not huge, wall-sized paintings, or 500-page books, or seminary courses on the doctrine of the Incarnation. Not even Ted Talks. Just a couple of Sunday snapshots, viewed together here at Grace, in the context of worship, pics of the divinity of Christ.

Long ago, the Church realized that the message of the Incarnation is central to her identity, and it's also a game-changer. The good News of Emmanuel, God with us, is also difficult news. It's revolutionary, mind-blowing. It's a possibility and a realization that takes time to sink in, to get our heads around. So long ago our foremothers and forefathers in the Church developed some "tools," some helps to aid us understand and live into this mind-blowing new reality. They created the liturgy, the New Testament, and the Church Calendar, all of them means by which we grow into deeper understanding and experience of our new corporate life in the Incarnate, Risen Christ.

The Church ordered her own passage through the solar year into a new series of "solar-season-adjacent" seasons, or worship seasons. And all of them, in a way, focus on the Incarnation, the profound affirmation that God the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, took on created human nature according to the the mystery of God's will and God's good pleasure. So we celebrate a season in which we anticipate that mighty act of God, and then there's a short, joyous celebration of it as a discrete event. And then, because Advent and Christmas didn't seem to be enough, we got a longer season to sit with the good news, to contemplate it together, in worship. And that's Epiphany, six or eight weeks to consider and celebrate the game-changing good news that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. More specifically, we're meditating together, in time-tested, life-giving church-ways, how Christ is revealed as God-with-us.

Two weeks ago, those wise men began it all by following a miraculous star, a stellar quirk in the cosmos. They had a miraculous star, a divine sign, but they still had to stop and ask for directions. They found Jesus, the Cosmic King, but he was just a little kid, in a little family, living in a little village. It was all very natural, despite the star that was supernatural. A humble villager born to be a cosmic king; that in itself is quite a mystery. It's a mystery in the mundane; a mystery in history. Last Sunday Jesus was baptized by his cousin, down by the river. Actually, they got in the river. They got wet! But then, almost immediately afterwards, a miraculous voice spoke from heaven. Again, there's normality and divinity together, closely interconnected but not confused.

Today, at a wedding party, Jesus revealed himself as a wonder worker, one who performs incredible feats as signs that disclose who he really is. He's the one who brings wine from water, in order to let the good times roll! They had a problem, and Jesus solved it. Mary said, "Jesus! We've run out of wine." And Jesus responded to her with those strange words, "Lady. It's not my problem. My time has not yet come." Who is this guy?! I like what Mary did next. I picture her turning around, rolling her eyes, and saying, "Oh boy. Here he goes again." Then she probably walked away, but whispered to the wine steward and the servants as she passed by, "Just do whatever he says." Mary knew Jesus. She knew her son would help out, that he was a problem solver.

So three quick observations on this Second Sunday after the Epiphany; three Epiphany points. First, before today others revealed Jesus's divinity — wise men and voices from heaven. This morning Jesus did the revealing. As John put it, he performed a sign to reveal his glory. And from now on, during the rest of this church season, from now until Ash Wednesday (March 3rd), Jesus will do almost all of the revealing. He'll reveal his glory in different ways, with more wonderful signs, but also through his teaching, and through acts of compassionate kindness.

A second Epiphany point might be this, that Christ's divinity is revealed to us in mysterious and also mundane ways. We learn that God is with us through special testimony — miraculous stars, heavenly voices, water turned to wine. But the testimony of these divine witnesses comes in normal, natural, material ways. We know the Risen Christ is Lord by faith, but faith is not fantasy. We're not called out of our reality to encounter the divine; instead, we meet it in our reality, here and now, not confused with our world and experience, or ultimately dependent on them, but inseparable from them.

Which leads to a final point: we must watch for the wonder, look for divinity breaking into our reality, listen for the divine voice. We must pay attention to the signs. The rest of the Sundays in the season after the Epiphany will help us do just that. When we're out and about with others, having a good time, celebrating some passage of life or other, God may reveal Christ reconciling the world in some wonderful yet real way. It could be in some surprising way, but it will be recognizable. If we're paying attention. May God's Holy Spirit grant us the grace to do just that. Amen.