



ST. STEPHEN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
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The Feast of the Epiphany
Transferred from January 6 to January 12, 2014

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠

The passage selected for our sermon this morning is taken from the Epistle:

“It is now revealed to his holy apostles and Prophets by the Spirit, That the Gentiles shall be fellow heirs of the same Body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of The grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who is less than the least of all the Saints, is this grace given.”

Eph. 3:5-8

For Christians, Epiphany is really as important as Christmas. At Christmas, the Messiah is born, according to the Scriptures, to be the fulfillment of the Covenant between God and His holy people. Those of us who were not born Jews were excluded from the Covenant. But a strange thing happens at the birth of this miraculous child. The angels who, proclaim the Infant King to the Shepherds, recall the promise

made to Adam and Eve as they left the Garden of Eden, and the promise to Abraham and Sarah, that the Chosen people are to be a blessing to all nations and to all men. The Angels sing, “I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

The Magi are the first of the Gentiles to recognize this promise. They bring gifts of great value, frankincense, myrrh and gold to the newly born king. But they are not remembered as much for their gift as for their journey. A miraculous light appears as a harbinger of the new king, and these three kings humble themselves and pursue the star to honor the Great King. It is journey that was at least a year long, and could have been two or even three times longer. These men changed the course of their lives. They put everything else aside to take the time to honor the new born king. They carried valuables with them, but the most important gift they offered was their

attention and their time. They were kings, they were the wisest men in their realms, and yet they would forsake their comfort and privilege to adore a baby in a manger.

That is what we are called to do, to humble ourselves; to consecrate our journey on this earth, to change our lives, to bring gifts to Our Lord and King. We are to bear witness to the Truth and to follow in the Way of the Lord and the Light of the World.

What kind of gifts are we to bring. We are to bring our weakness, our tribulation, our infirmity, our whole lives, including our deaths. In Psalm 50 David tells to offer unto God thanksgiving, pay our vows unto the Most Highest, and call upon Him in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee and thou shalt praise me. In Psalm 51, He says that the gift desired by God is a broken spirit, a humble and contrite heart.

In the Gospel, Bethlehem is glorified, though it was the home of the weakest and least significant of the tribes, it was to be the place where the Infant king enters this world.

St. Paul tells us he is the least of the Saints and the Apostles, because he persecuted the Church in his blindness. The Lord finally gave him physical blindness. It was offering up that infirmity in humility that made his life acceptable and transformed him from a vessel of terror into a vessel of grace. As the great mystery that was

shrouded from the ages is revealed to include all of us in the plan of Redemption, we too must respond as St. Paul did. We are to embrace those tribulations that we do not understand, and to accept on faith that they are given to us for our own greater good and the benefit of those the Lord has given us to witness to and influence.

That is our response to the gift of grace to be included in the Kingdom.

To humble ourselves, to offer up our infirmity, to bring gifts of our travails in life and set them before the king, to be blessed by Him, and returned to us as badges of sanctity. Let us thank God that He has transformed the travails and sadness that are the just consequence of our sinfulness. He has forgiven our sins and has given us an opportunity to witness self sacrificing, self effacing Christian love to the whole world. There are Gentiles to whom this Word has not been preached. There are Gentiles that have heard this Covenant and still struggle to believe. To us who have received the Circumcision of Spirit is given the task of witnessing the Gospel to those who are Gentiles of Spirit, and who may be brought to His Kingdom by the way we handle our adversities in faith, hope and especially in Love for our God and for each other.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen