



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

The Feast of the Epiphany
Transferred from January 6 to January 10, 2016

✠ 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 Gospel:

“WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Eph. 3:5-8

Carolyn and I had the grandchildren for Christmas. Remi, who had stayed in Virginia when they came up, was supposed to drive up Christmas Eve to join us for services and our traditional Christmas Eve family time. Of course, he was also supposed to be bringing presents Carolyn had hidden at the Virginia house. He called about noon to say that he had gotten ill and couldn't make the drive, and we knew that the children would be disappointed that their big gifts from Nana and Gramps wouldn't be there first thing Christmas morning.

Remi did rally and made it up late Christmas Day, and he brought the gifts with him. It was only then that Carolyn and I had our own Epiphany. The children certainly wanted

the gifts Remi was bringing, but most importantly, they were afraid they would miss the chance to give him their gifts. The whole concern over gifts that were brought was reversed within the hearts of the children to be about the gifts to be given. It was an important Epiphany to us.

For Christians, the 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 considered to be excluded from the Covenant. But a strange thing happens at the birth of this miraculous child. The angels which 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 people. The Angels sing, “I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all men”

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. Each gift is symbolic, gold for a King, Frankincense for a Priest, and Myrrh for the Sacrificial Offering. However, the gifts are not the story. The wise men should be remembered as much for their journey as for their gifts. A miraculous light appears as a harbinger of the new king, and these three kings humbled themselves to pursue the star to honor the Greater King.

It is journey that was likely a year long, and could have been two. Remember that Herod killed all the male children under two years old. These men changed the course of their lives. They put everything else aside to take the time to honor Jesus. They carried valuables with them, but the most important gifts 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.

Of course, what they did is what we are also 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.

While the Magi were called to bring gifts of great value to the new born king in his humble abode, we can't forget that we too are called to bring gifts to the Lord of Lords. They knelt before a babe in a manger, but we are called to kneel before the presence of our God and King in our pews and at the Altar rail. Like the Kings, we should not come empty handed, but we should bring our gifts. But, 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 He hear us and we shalt praise Him. In Psalm 51, He says that the gift desired by God is a broken spirit, a humble and contrite heart. In place of gold, frankincense and myrrh, we should offer the holy gifts of humility, repentance and obedience.

The offering of these gifts are important to God, even more important than the gifts offered to the infant Jesus. You have heard me talk about why the God of all things cares to receive our gifts, why He demands that we give these gifts. He does not demand them because he needs them or glories in them. He covets our gifts so that He can bless them and return them to us as something more glorious than we could have imagined when we offered them up. Humility, repentance and obedience are returned to us as the Glory of God, everlasting life, and the peace that passes all understanding.

Of course, that is the Epiphany. It is not the gifts that we bring, but the way they are transformed and returned to us. The Magi brought the precious things of their realms, and in exchange, they received immortality. They are remembered for as long as Man exists in this world in the Gospel, and they are with the King they put before the important issues of their own lives for life everlasting.

And our Epiphany is the same. We offer our sadness, our fear, our joys, our lives, the good and the bad. What is returned to us is transformed not only into good, but to glorious. We become inheritors of the love of God the Father for His Son. We become the adopted children of God. We become the chosen people, recipients of the greatest gift of all.

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