

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord  
St. Matthew 2:1-12  
January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## They Fell Down and Worshiped Him

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Lord God, heavenly Father, Who hast given us the light of Thy holy Word, the guiding star, which leadeth us to the Christ-child: Send, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive this light and make use of it unto our salvation, and that we, like the wise men, when they were seeking the star, may not be afraid because of any hardship or peril, but put all our trust in Thine Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, as our only Savior; devote our earthly possessions to the advancement of Thy Kingdom, and in all things serve Him, Thine Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

As you hear the account of the wise men—the magi—visiting the infant Lord + Jesus, you discover that it is not simply about the manifestation, appearance, revelation and epiphany of the Lord + Jesus. While He is the center of the magi's investigation and travels as well as the center of the story, the Holy Child is not the only One Who is made known. Also manifested are the Father and the Holy Ghost—yet indirectly, so as not to overshadow the Son of the Virgin. For the Lord + Jesus is Savior of all nations, the Beloved Son sent by God the Father to redeem mankind and to give His life as a ransom for many. Yet He does not do the work alone, He works in communion with the Father and the Holy Ghost. And so, they also are manifested and made known through Him.

So, where are the Father and the Holy Ghost? What role do they play in the Lord's epiphany?

Notice how the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew tells the story. The magi do not just appear out of nowhere. They are led to the infant Lord by a star. But not just a star, for they know of the promise of a King to be born; a promise that finds fulfillment in a specific location. What is that promise? "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel."

That promise is recorded by the prophet Micah, but it is not Micah who makes the promise. The promise is made by God the Father. He speaks of sending His Son, Who will rule over not just Israel, and not even the whole world, but Who will rule life by conquering death and the devil. In this way He will be the Good Shepherd Who shepherds the Lord's people—the Church. That is the promise God the Father makes through the Prophet Micah.

It is that prophetic promise that gets the magi on their way. For how would they know about a coming Ruler and Shepherd if the Prophet Micah had not preached and recorded the Lord's promise? And how would they know which way to point their camels if they had not heard "Bethlehem, in the land

of Judah”? So, they say to themselves, “If we want to seek and find this Child, this Ruler, this Shepherd, we must believe the Word which the Lord spoke through His holy prophets. We must stick to it and not allow ourselves to be diverted from it. If we disregard or disbelieve what the Lord says, then we will certainly lose the Christ Child. For it is not by our imagination or our wisdom or our intellect that we have heard of the Christ, and believe Him to be a Ruler and Shepherd; a Savior and King. It is only because God has given us His Word that we believe Him to be worth finding and adoring and believing. So, we must make the Lord’s Word our reliance—or we will not see the Savior.”

Therefore, as we teach, the Lord + Jesus is not found apart from His Word. Not in the imagination of your heart or in your clever scheming, but only in the preaching and hearing of the Word. That is how the magi know to worship the Christ. And that is how you also know that the Holy Child born in Bethlehem is both your Savior and your Lord: through the preached Word—through the promises found in the Word of God.

It all hinges on the promise of the Father. The Father gives His Word, and the magi believe it and, in faith, move to worship and adore the Child. And the Holy Ghost, Who begets faith through the Word of God sustains their hope, and increases their faith. He emboldens their confidence. And the Holy Ghost preserves their reliance on the Father’s promise so that they are not dissuaded by other thoughts, or discouraged by the difficulties of the journey, or frightened by the devil lurking around every corner. Their journey to the Christ is no different than your journey in Christ. Sickness, death, job loss, family difficulties, various personal hardships, crosses and trials seem to the world to be evidences that the Lord Triune God is not with us. Quite the contrary, these prove that the Triune God must be with us. For if He were as distant as the devil and the world would have us believe, we would certainly perish. But His promise leads us. He has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

Yet the Holy Ghost is also found elsewhere in the story. He is the star. For what does the star do? Does it not lead the magi directly to Christ? Does it not lead them to the Life of mankind Himself, to the Savior and Righteousness of God that they were seeking? Surely that star is the Holy Ghost Who proceeds from the Father and the Son so that He might lead us by faith in the Son and enkindle in us a holy and certain hope.

And so, led by the Holy Ghost, even as we are, relying on the Father’s promise, the magi faithfully seek and worship Christ the Lord. Their faith and persistence are rewarded with the object of their faith: the Lord + Jesus.

What is encouraging for us, is that the magi represent all Gentiles—all the nations including us. They have received nothing more extraordinary or spectacular than you have received. In fact, you have more. For when the Father by the Holy Ghost leads them to Christ + Jesus the Lord, all they can do is present gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Fine gifts indeed, but not worthy to be compared with the gift you receive when the Father by the same Holy Ghost led you to the Lord Christ + Jesus. For in your Holy Baptism, the riches of Heaven were bestowed upon you: the forgiveness of sins of your sins, and eternal life and salvation. In the Holy Supper you also have the Divine Savior given to you in His Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. The epiphany of the Lord + Jesus reveals His saving work of redemption for you through His innocent suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross. At this altar you are now in the same place as the magi. Like them you fall down on your knees and worship Him, and instead of leaving gifts before the infant Lord + Jesus, you receive from Him the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. For in His Holy Body and precious Blood is the forgiveness of sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

By the Holy Sacrament the Lord makes known to you the fullness of His glory and gives you a foretaste of the fruition of His glorious Godhead, which we will enjoy for all eternity in Heaven. For in

the Supper of Christ's Body and Blood, you partake of the Lord + Jesus and know Him most intimately through faith in the promises He bestows upon you through this Blessed meal.

Therefore, the Festival of the Epiphany is more properly the story of how the Father, by the Holy Ghost, leads you to the Lord Christ + Jesus through the means of grace; His blessed Holy Baptism, His Holy Supper, and His Holy Absolution—the pronouncement of the forgiveness of your sins—so that, when we come to meet Him in His means of grace, we might come, kneel down, adore, and receive Him as Christ the Lord. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

O Eternal God and Father, Who hast revealed Thy Son as the only Savior from sin, and called us to the blessed knowledge of salvation, we thank Thee that Thou hast hitherto preserved Thy truth among us despite all the wiles and assaults of the Wicked One; and we beseech Thee, keep us evermore in purity of doctrine, and send forth Thy Word among men, accompanying it with the effectual working of Thy Holy Spirit, that many may be brought to know Thy Son, and obtain the inheritance of everlasting life; through the same Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*