

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord
St. Matthew 2:1-12
January 6th, 2026
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When Jesus Was Born

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

"Now when + Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.'"

Prayer in Pulpit before 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 the 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.

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

Today, my dear friends, we begin a new season. The twelve days of Christmas are over. The season of the Epiphany of our Lord has begun. The season of Epiphany is so-called because of the overall theme of this season. An epiphany is when someone realizes something that had previously been hidden from them. When we have a revelation of some mystery that has been alluding us, we call it an "epiphany." That is what an epiphany is: it is a revelation of some mystery or previously unknown thing; it is a manifestation of had previously been unknown. Therefore, if this season is called "Epiphany" what has been made manifest to us? What has been revealed to us that has previously been hidden from our knowledge? For the Church, the epiphany that occurs for her is that the Lord + Jesus is the Lord God in the flesh.

This first day of the season of Epiphany the Lord + Jesus is revealed as the Son of God by Wise-men from the east. He is made known to the Gentiles. He had already been made known to the Jews by the announcement of the angel to the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks by night. The whole host of the heavenly choir sang about this newborn Savior to the shepherds. They went that night, leaving their flocks by night, to go to Bethlehem to see this thing that had been told them by the angel. And they found it just as the angel had told them. They found the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Child wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Having seen this great sight, the shepherds then went about the surrounding area and "made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this Child." They revealed, and made manifest, that this Child was the Savior long promised. The Jews receive the revelation of the Lord + Jesus as the Son of God first. It is made manifest to the people of Israel, the people chosen by the Lord

God to be His people, first.

But as the Prophet Isaiah foretold in our epistle reading for today, the Gentiles would also receive this revelation, this epiphany about the Lord + Jesus, the Babe resting in the bosom of His mother Mary. The Wise-men had seen the Lord's star in the east. According to the Church Fathers, they saw this star two years before the Lord + Jesus had been born. The Church Fathers taught that the Wise-men arrived in Jerusalem shortly after the Lord's birth in Bethlehem. After their stop in Jerusalem, and their visit with King Herod, they would arrive in Bethlehem on this very day. For the Church Fathers taught that the dates that we celebrate for our Lord's birth are the actual dates that these events took place historically. Our Lord + Jesus was born on December 25th and the Wise-men from the east arrived on January 6th. They had begun their journey two years before the Lord was born, and arrived twelve days after our Lord's birth to worship Him.

So then, even the Gentiles would receive the good news of the birth of a Savior, of a "King." He is as the Wise-men called Him, "The King of the Jews." But He is not just a King for the Jews only, but He is the King for all the world. And that He is more than just an earthly King is shown to us—revealed to us—by what the Wise-men do to and for Him when they finally arrive in Bethlehem. They "fell down and worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." It was customary when one was a foreign dignitary, or king, to bring gifts when they were visiting a foreign king. As we saw recently in Bible class with the visit of the Queen of Sheba. She brought manifold gifts to King Solomon. But what is not customary is for the foreign kings, or queens, to fall down and worship the king they were visiting.

That they show the Lord + Jesus this obeisance, shows, reveals, makes known, manifests, that this Child was greater than an earthly king. For only a God would be shown this type of worship. The Wise-men, the magi in another translation, knew Who this Child truly was. He was the One born to redeem mankind from their sins. This truth had been made manifest to them while they were still in their homelands, while they were still in the east. How they came to this knowledge we are not told by holy Scripture. We are only told that they saw His star in the east. We do, however, know from the historical record revealed in the Scriptures that the east was from where Abraham had been called by the Lord God to depart that land, filled with false idols, and go into the land of Canaan. The east was also where the Babylonians had exiled the tribe of Judah, when they had turned their back on the worship of the Only and True Lord God, and worshipped other false gods. While they were still in exile, the Babylonians were also attacked and conquered, because of Nebuchadnezzar's son's prideful use of the temple cups for his feast to his false god. The Medes and the Persians, also from the east, would also rule over the exiled Judeans.

Like the shepherds who left their flocks by night to see the Baby Lord + Jesus, and who spread that account to the surrounding area, the Jews exiled in Babylon, repented of their false worship, and turned to the One, True Lord God, and shared the wonders of their Lord God with the people among whom they lived. We see that in the Books of Esther and Daniel.

Therefore, what had been entrusted to the Jews first, was also revealed to the Gentiles through their interaction with the people of Israel. The prophecy of Isaiah would come to fruition because the Lord God so willed it to be that way. And this is good news for us, because we are of the Gentiles. The good news of a Savior, a King born for us, has been made manifest to us. It has been revealed to us that this Child Who rests in His mother's arms is not just the King of the Jews, but the King and Savior of the whole world. This promise and prophecy of Isaiah would be fulfilled completely when St. Paul began to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, when St. Peter would meet with Cornelius and baptize him and his whole household. But today, we see that the will of the Lord God was that the whole world should know about this King of the Jews, when the Lord + Jesus was born.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thanks to the Lord God that He has revealed to us that which was previously hidden and unknown to the Gentiles, that this Child is the King of the Jews. His star revealed to the Wise-men that He had been born. Shepherds also proclaimed the birth of this Child. We have also heard about our Lord and Savior, Who is born King of the Jews, through those who have preached Him into our ears. He has been made manifest for us. He has been revealed to us as the Savior of the whole world. More importantly, He has been made manifest as our Savior from sin and death. He has called us Gentiles out of sin and darkness by the appearance of the Star. Our Star, our light that reveals the truth in the darkness, is the Lord + Jesus Himself. He is the Light that reveals to us Who our Lord and Savior is. He leads us out of the darkness of sin and death, into the Light of the truth. In Him, is the Epiphany that salvation is to be found in Him alone.

What has been revealed, what has been made manifest, what has been made known is the mystery that was long hidden from the world. The mystery was when the Messiah would come, and Who He would be. Many looked for an earthly king, which is why King Herod, and all Jerusalem with Him, were troubled at the arrival of the Wise-men. But our Lord did not come to be an earthly king, but He came to be an eternal King. Having fulfilled the Law of God perfectly, and having suffered and died for our sins, and the sins of the whole world, He has now ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He lives and reigns for all eternity as the Victor and Conqueror of sin and death. This gift is for both Jews and Gentiles alike. It is for us! Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the 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!