

Epiphany of Our Lord – Sunday, January 7, 2024

The feast of Epiphany (“manifestation”) concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God’s love to all people.

**Greeting** – The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
the Word made flesh,  
our life and our salvation.

**Amen.**

Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God  
our Savior,  
let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

God of life,

**you promise good news of great joy for all**

**people,**

**and call us to be messengers of your peace.**

**We confess that too often we hoard our joy,**

**our resources, and our security.**

**We nurture conflict and build barriers.**

**We neglect the needs of our neighbors**

**and ignore the groaning of creation.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.**

**Where we are reluctant, give us courage.**

**Where we are cynical, restore our trust.**

**Renew us with your grace**

**and give us again the hope of eternal life in you.**

**Amen.**

Hear the good news:

We are children of God and heirs of God’s promises  
through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed.

Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth  
shall know the salvation of God.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn**

**“As with Gladness Men of Old”**

**#302 vs. 1,3,5**

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Reading from Isaiah 60:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup>For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

<sup>3</sup>Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

<sup>4</sup>Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses’ arms.

<sup>5</sup>Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

<sup>6</sup>A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew 2:1-12**

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

### **Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

This Epiphany story gives us a glimpse into the in-breaking power of the Incarnation. The Incarnation – God taking on human form and living among us.

The Magi, the wisemen, the astrologers, whatever you might call them, see a peculiar star at its rising and know that it is something they must follow. They knew the star was special. They knew that it marked the birth of the “Child, born King of the Jews.”

So they went. They traveled to Jerusalem to King Herod to ask where this child might be. “Where is this child who has been born King of the Jews?”

This news shakes Herod to the core, and in this we see how what the Angels told Mary of the child that she is carrying, and what it means for the mighty and powerful plays out. “Herod is frightened, and all Jerusalem with him.” Simply hearing of Christ’s birth shakes Herod and the foundation of his power and his hold over his people.

So he devises a plan. Herod calls together all of the religious elite, he draws from all of the knowledge of the Scribes and Chief Priests and asks, “what are these men talking about? And, where might I find this baby they speak of?”

The religiously educated knew exactly what they were talking about. This is the exact thing the prophets had written about when they said, “from you Bethlehem shall come a ruler.”

Knowing now where the could be found he implores the wisemen to go and find out the exact spot and return to him so that he, too, can pay him homage. Though we all know this was part of his plan to maintain his grip on his power and his people.

And so, they set out. Following the star that they had seen at its rising, they went until it rested over where they would find the baby. And when it stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. Again, this is a moment where we see the transformative power of God breathing life into the world. Simply seeing that they had made it, they were overwhelmed with joy.

This is the part of the story where we laughed a bit last week, with the cartoon of the wise-women arriving after the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought by the wise men, the women had diapers, wipes, and a bottle of wine for the new mom.

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Jan Richardson writes:

Wise women also came.  
The fire burned in their wombs long before  
they saw  
the flaming star in the sky.

They walked in shadows, trusting the path  
would open under the light of the moon.

Wise women also came,  
seeking no directions,  
no permission from any king.

They came by their own authority,  
their own desire,  
their own longing.

They came in quiet, spreading no rumors,  
sparkling no fears to lead to innocents' slaughter,  
to their sister Rachel's inconsolable lamentations.

Wise women also came,  
and they brought useful gifts:  
water for labor's washing,  
fire for warm illumination,  
a blanket for swaddling.

Wise women also came,  
at least three of them,  
holding Mary in the labor,  
crying out with her in the birth pangs,  
breathing ancient blessings into her ear.

Wise women also came,  
and they went,  
as wise women always do,  
home a different way.  
- Jan Richardson

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We are again reminded of the in-breaking power of the Incarnation – God breaking into the world with the cries of a baby.

It's not the image of the peaceful quiet birth that many of us have been told in our childhood and throughout history. And that is okay.

And, it is okay because it reminds us that God isn't *just* present in the perfect, but rather, the Light breaks into every moment, making space in each second of our lives. Because that is how God came into the world. God who in the beginning breathed life into creation, at the Incarnation came crying into the world as a baby.

And we are reminded in this Epiphany story, through the prophetic texts, what this new King means for us and for all of God's people.

<sup>6</sup>And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

It is this very prophecy that causes Herod to want to rid himself of his Jesus problem. Jesus is not the king that any would expect. Kings lord their power over their subjects. Kings don't shepherd. Shepherd's come alongside and compassionately care for those whom they lead. That's not what kings do.

But it is what Jesus does. And in this Epiphany story we are reminded that the Light of Christ knows no bounds, and can't be contained or kept out of whatever moments we might think it impossible for God to come into.

By taking on human flesh and living among us we are given a Shepherd King who compassionately comes alongside us in each of life's wild and crazy moments.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

**Hymn of the Day**    “Love Has Come”

#292

**Apostle's Creed**

**Prayers of Intercession**

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

*A brief silence.*

Humble the hearts of your faithful people, that we seek to be servants of your gospel and witnesses to your mysteries. Give us boldness in faith, that we make the good news of Christ's birth known to all people. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Establish justice on earth for all its inhabitants. Lead us to protect fragile ecosystems and endangered species. Empower the work of all who research, engineer, and make accessible alternative and renewable sources of energy. Make us careful stewards of your creation. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Nations shall come to your light and kings to your dawning. Remove corruption and fear from the hearts of leaders and authorities. Lead governments to expand policies and resources that care for refugees and all migrants. Strengthen the work of resettlement agencies (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Defend the cause of all who are in need, all facing poverty, and all who are oppressed. Come quickly to those who feel that their lives and livelihoods are fragile (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Cherri, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary*). Give them strength and lead them forth with hope. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

As the magi offered gifts to the Christ child, empower us to give generously. Prosper the work of ministry partnerships in our community (*especially*). Together, help us share what we have to ensure that our neighbors have enough food, resources, and opportunities. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You have redeemed the lives of your faithful departed. Through the love of Christ, gather us into one body with them, and reveal to us the mystery hidden for ages in the One who created all things. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

**Amen.**



# 2023 Financial Snapshot

	Month of December	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$36,292	\$322,569
Total Expenses	\$33,210	\$296,702
Difference	\$3,082	\$25,866

## Your Generosity in Action:

2023 Quarterly Missions Report:

 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi \$2,038.09	 Luther Park \$2,685.43	 LIRS \$2,133.51	 Feed My People FOOD BANK \$2,058.44
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THANK YOU!!

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	\$4,960	\$0	\$4,960
	2023: \$35,377	2023: \$27,631	



**A HOPEFUL FUTURE. TOGETHER WITH PURPOSE.**

For each other. For the community. A future together.

- STEWARDSHIP APPEAL 2023 -

IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO PLEDGE YOUR 2024 COMMITMENT



Good Shepherd Apparel  
Order by January 17th

## Your Generosity in Action:

During finals week, the newly formed InReach team delivered care packages to some of our college students. This group, born from our Strategic Plan process, is excited to grow deeper connections in the congregation!



Delivery of College Care Kits

THANK YOU!!

