

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord

St. Matthew 2:1-12

January 6th, 2018

Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church

Simpsonville, SC

Pastor Jerald Dulas

After Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Today we celebrate the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord + Jesus Christ. During the season of Epiphany, we will hear from the Evangelists how our Lord + Jesus reveals Himself as the man Who is also God. That is what the word epiphany means, “to be revealed.” When you have an epiphany, you come to an understanding that you did not have before. The truth has been revealed to you. During the season of Epiphany our Lord will reveal that He is God in the flesh. He will also reveal that He is not just the God of the Hebrews, but is also the God of the Gentiles. This is certainly evident in today’s Propers.

Gentiles from the East come to worship our Lord. These so-called “wise men” are most likely from the lands to which the Israelites were exiled. When they were in exile, they continued to worship the One, True God. This had a lasting effect on the people of that land. Even though they may not have converted to Judaism, they still read and honored the word of God that was spoken of by the Jewish prophets. To this end, these wise men, having seen the star of Jacob in the east, come to the capital city of the Jews—Jerusalem.

Their arrival and proclamation that they have come to worship the newborn king leaves King Herod and all of Jerusalem troubled. As far as Jerusalem was concerned, there was no newborn king. However, they all knew that the wise men were talking about the Messiah—the Anointed One of God—Who would come to redeem all Israel. The fact that this is troubling to Herod and all Jerusalem is telling. They did not want a Messiah. In their minds they did not need a Messiah. They were getting along just fine. They did not need someone coming along and calling them to repentance and faith. Which is why when St. John the Baptist comes along telling them that very thing and preparing the way of the Lord, they put him in prison and eventually behead him.

The same happens to our Lord + Jesus when He comes after St. John the Baptist, preaching the same message that John preached: repentance toward the forgiveness of sins. Our Lord was constantly tested by the scribes and leaders of the Law; He was tested and questioned relentlessly by the Pharisees and Sadducees. For, they did not want a Messiah; certainly not the Messiah that was given to them by the Lord God.

So, it is troubling to sinners to hear of a redeemer. For, they, not knowing what poor, miserable sinners they are, and what great need they have of redemption from their sins, have no need for a

redeemer. They do not want to hear about their sin. They do not want to know that sin has corrupted them to their very heart and soul, so that they cannot rescue themselves by their good deeds and thoughts and actions. There is only God's eternal wrath and displeasure waiting for all those who reject the Lord + Jesus and choose to trust in their own works.

This is why it is telling that the Jews, who supposedly had been waiting since almost the beginning of creation for a Savior are troubled, but the Gentiles, the wise men, who have had no part in the promises given throughout Holy Scripture are desperately seeking the Child. The truly sad thing is that the Jews—the chief priests and scribes—know exactly where the Messiah is to be born. The Prophet Micah had foretold it. He would be born in Bethlehem. Just a few miles from Jerusalem. It was the birthplace of King David himself. It was the place, as we have discussed in Bible class, the place where Jacob's wife, Rachel, had died giving birth to Joseph's brother Benjamin. It is where she would be buried, and so all the children born in that tiny city would be considered her children.

She would weep over her children on account of the murderous actions of Herod that take place after our Gospel reading. In his unrepentance and unbelief, he would kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and younger. So, sought the devil and his minions to destroy the Savior of mankind. So, sought unrepentant mankind to deprive those who pined after a Savior from having and believing on Him.

However, the magi, the wise men from the East, we are told were exceedingly joyful that the Savior which they sought would be able to be found by them.

The baby born in Bethlehem, Who was God the Lord; Who was God in the flesh is found and worshiped by the Gentiles. This same Savior has been preached and given to us Gentiles. The promise of salvation is not just for the Jews, but for all those who are spiritual Jews. All those who are spiritual children of Rachel, have a brother born in Bethlehem. The wise men, having found the Child fall on their knees, and worship Him. They give Him gifts. He receives gifts that represent His threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King: Myrrh, Frankincense, and Gold. Myrrh mixed with Olive Oil was used to anoint a prophet, frankincense was burned before the altar of God by the priests and represented the prayers of the saints being brought before the throne of God, and gold was a sign of His kingship.

We also see from this the proper way to honor and worship the Lord God. Every knee should bow before the Lord + Jesus because of what He has done for mankind. We too, should especially bow and kneel before Him, because in our faith, we know what He has done for us. We who are sinners, and know our sin, know what sacrifice He took upon Himself for our redemption. We know what we deserve on account of our manifold sins. And we know how unworthy in and of ourselves we are to receive the gracious gift of love that our Lord + Jesus Christ suffers for us, but gives to us freely out of his great grace and mercy.

Our Lord + Jesus has revealed Himself to us through His Word and Sacraments to be our Redeemer and Savior. He has revealed Himself to be God in the flesh. He has fulfilled the Law for us, and suffered our punishment on the cross.

Let us therefore, fall on our knees before Him, and receive from Him His real and substantial Body and Blood given for us Christians to eat and drink in bread and wine. So that we might ever cling to Him, especially when the Herods of today seek to destroy our faith, and take away our joy. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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