

Epiphany #1 Baptism of Jesus

1-9-2022

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Today’s festival rejoices in God’s blessings. We recall and celebrate our adoption as God’s children, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promised company of almighty God when we ‘pass through the waters... the rivers ... fire.’ On this day the heavens open again for this assembly, and we received the gift of God’s Beloved Jesus, in bread and wine.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Brightest and Best of the Stars”](#)

Psalmody: Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,^[a]
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

²Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy array.

³The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, upon many waters.

⁴The voice of the Lord is powerful,
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.

⁵The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars,
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,
and Sir’ion like a young wild ox.

⁷The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness,
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl,^[b]
and strips the forests bare;
and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

¹⁰The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king for ever.

¹¹May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!”

Hymn of Praise: [“As With Gladness Men of Old”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful in your service, that we may rejoice to be called children of God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 43:1-7](#)

2nd Reading: [Acts 8:14-17](#)

The Gospel: [Luke 3:15-17, 21-22](#)

Hymn: [“Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

This past Thursday was Epiphany, one of the major feast days in the church calendar. But, of course since it was a weekday we didn't observe it. Oddly enough Epiphany is one of the oldest of the Christian feast days. It even predates Christmas. Actually there are some Christian traditions which celebrate Christmas on January 6th, while others celebrate it as a second Christmas.

The word epiphany means to show, to reveal, to make known or the manifestation. The Greek words for epiphany means the appearance or miraculous phenomenon. A contributor to Wikipedia relates, “Epiphany is a Christian feast intended to celebrate the ‘shinning forth’ or the revelation of God to mankind in human form in the person of Jesus.”

Of course the celebration of the first revelation was in part to Mary and Joseph followed by the revelation given through the angel's message of good news to the shepherds. But the revelation or manifestation of God took on a broader meaning with the magi, wise men, or inappropriately also called kings. These Magi were not Jews or from the land occupied by the Jews, but from a foreign country perhaps Persia or what is now Arabia. This was extremely important since this was the first indication that God's manifestation was not the long awaited Jewish political Messiah but was a Savior, a Messiah for all people regardless of their origin. Epiphany for western Christianity emphasizes this by relating Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus with the revelation to the wise men through a bright shining star and their follow through visit to the Christ child.

Western Christianity's celebration of Epiphany focused upon this manifestation experience of the wise men. Over the centuries misconception of the Matthew account have occurred. Matthew relates these visitors as wise men or magi. They were not kings but astronomers, scholars, and interpreters of heavenly signs. It was the unusual bright star or which some think a comet, which would only be evident and interpreted through such students of the skies. Although we like to place the wise men at the stable along with the shepherds for our crèche displays, this is further from the truth. The wise men most likely came not just weeks but months after Jesus' birth. Their destination ended up at a house as Matthew relates and not at a stable. Lastly, is the idea that there were three wise men. The number three has been an assumption since there were three gifts given. In addition, traditions and legends later emphasized the wise men represented the three known regions of the world- Europe, the East and Africa. This is why one of the magi is represented to be a black man. Spanish tradition has the European riding a horse, the Magi from the East on a camel and the African upon an elephant.

In the fourth century Augustine upgraded the wise men to the status of royalty and thereby enter the three kings. By upgrading their social status Augustine was hoping to upgrade the whole season away from the pagan, secular celebration of winter solstice. What actually happened was that royalty identified Epiphany as the holiday of Royalty and celebrated themselves with all manner of secular festivals. Through this identity they thought that they had a special relationship with Christ. Therefore, Epiphany became a holiday to honor royalty with a "mardi gras" atmosphere diminishing the fact that it was to be a holy day.

It is unclear when many of the religious traditions of Epiphany appeared. Some say they happened along with the change of Christmas in the 19th century. But it is most likely that they had been practiced and developed through the centuries in Europe and especially in the Germanic states and nations.

Many have heard me tell the story of when I first moved into my building in Fell's Point. For years it was owned by a Polish family. Above the exterior doorway to the kitchen I discovered on the lintel some numbers and letters written with chalk. When a Priest friend of mine saw it he immediately knew what it was and told me that it was the Epiphany blessing and was written most likely by the local Polish parish priest. Such blessings occurred during Epiphany Eve. As I have discovered this is not only a Polish tradition but a tradition in many European countries. For many each room of the house was blessed with holy water and incense and highlighted by writing C M B and the year in chalk over the entrance doorway. Many claim the initials represented the name of the three wise men Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. Of course these are legendary names. With this the blessing was given with the blessing such as, "Oh Lord, grant that the names of the Saints, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, may, through their merits and petitions bless our home and bring physical health and spiritual protection for all who enter here. Amen." Others believe the letters stand for the Latin words meaning Christ bless this home.

In Bavaria and Austria there is the tradition of the Star Singers. From New Years to January 6th children dressed as kings follow a child holding a large star as they go house to house singing carols. During their walk they collect money and sweets which are left at the house where they thought the Christ Child would be. The collection is then given to charity. In some traditions the 12th Night, January 5th, is celebrated with the taking down of the greens and then burning them in a celebration reminiscent of Saturnalia. This ends the celebration of Christmas. In Spain, South America, Latin America and Mexico, Epiphany is celebrated as “El Dia de los Reyes,” the day of the Three Kings. Epiphany Eve children fill their shoes with hay for the kings’ camels in hopes that the kings will leave them gifts. On the day of Epiphany many of these countries have elaborate processions of the kings ending with a celebration of games and gifts. Other traditions involved the baking of special breads or cakes which incorporate a hidden item. The person who finds it is designated king or queen of the celebration.

In some traditions which celebrate Christmas with the crèche, the crèche is void of the wise men during the actual twelve days of the Christmas season. The three magi figures are placed in the farthest room from the crèche. Each day between Christmas and Epiphany they are relocated to a closer room or location to the creche. Finally on Epiphany Day they are placed around the manger.

In the Eastern and Greek Orthodox Church, the importance and emphasis of Epiphany is the observance of the Baptism of Jesus, which is the event of Jesus’ manifestation. The baptism was when God proclaimed. “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” The Greeks celebrate this manifestation through the Feast of the Theophany or God shining forth. Thus during the day of Epiphany the Greek Orthodox Church performs the “Blessing of the Waters.” After the traditional liturgy in the local church, the clerics, dignitaries, and parish members process through the streets to the nearest body of water. At the water’s edge there is a brief ceremony at the end of which the priest throws a cross into the water thus blessing the water. Even in the frigid January waters, volunteers, usually young men and boys, jump into the water to retrieve it. The one who retrieves the cross receives a special blessing.

All of the traditions are to lead us to the central theme of Epiphany. God has manifested Himself to the entire world in the life of Jesus. His manifestation is the light of that star which leads us to the realization that God’s love knows no divide – it is for everyone. Let us let the light of the star, the radiance of God’s love, shine through our lives as we live day in and day out. The Epiphany is for us to live the good news revealed to us through the incarnation, the birth and life of Christ.

Anthem: [Bell Anthem](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Lord God, as we celebrate Epiphany may the light of your message through Jesus become the beacon which guides our lives through whatever dark times confront us. This is especially true now as we live another surge of the pandemic. Give us patience and wisdom to take the necessary precautions not only for our own wellbeing but the wellbeing of others. May the message of Epiphany lead us to see no divide within all of your children. In light of this, we are thankful that we are able to help others whose lives are in desperate need. We pray that our fellowship of believers will always be able to respond out of your example of love.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, Leo Dickel, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, Dotty Gibson, Kraig Greff, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Della, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Bright and Glorious is the Sky"](#)

Announcements

Sunday service is at 9:30 AM

Please note that Masks are required while in the church building.

*Offering to be sent to
Robert Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291