

Pastor Roy's Sermon from January 3, 2016 (Epiphany of our Lord)

Epiphany: Isaiah speaks of a dawn of hope. In a land filled with confusion and frustration covering the peoples, a paranoid kings, suffocating poverty is dawning the gentle light of God, a star, a pilgrimage of faith seekers, a child, faithful parents. Grace prevails. Despair is thwarted. There is good news.

Epiphany! The mystery of God, the birth of faith. Faith shining forth. The season of Christmas is the season of God in flesh. Then comes the Aha! of Epiphany. Magi follow the lead of a bright star, seeking. Epiphany is Jesus the bearer of good tidings of grace and peace—God is with us.

God with us as a keen presence. God with us in Christ as wisdom which gives courage. Jesus the God presence. So indeed, those who seek this life filled presence are never alone. We learn in Christ that are forgiven, accepted, embraced. . .not for what we do, but by our very existence. This is why we baptize children. They are beloved not because they have the right parents, or grandparents, or hopes of good choices in the future. No. Birth results in belovedness. Beloved children of God. Pure Gift. No need to please anyone or prove worthiness. The Creator creates beloved creatures. We are, therefore we are beloved, even when we lose our way, even when we sin. Salvation is the revealing of mercy which is always a gift, and always on the table, and never depends on us.

The wise travelers seek the child of the star. They seek the eternal. They seek truth. They seek what will remain after the fluff and hot air and the momentary fade into the distance. They follow the light, a hope which calls them to be still and consider, to ponder the holiness in a moment before a child. Before a common peasant child. A moment made holy because they *still* themselves before this child.

In their day, who cared about a child? Who cared about a poor child with no foreseeable future. Like foam in the pounding surf. A blade of grass in a field. A twig in a forest. A grain of sand on the seashore. This common peasant child--among so many others.

Would we notice the poor peasant child under the starlight? Would we give gifts? Would we still ourselves before the child? Would we make the time and find the energy within us to love the child and take chances?

What Epiphany do you seek today? Protection? Wisdom? Peace? A break?

Are we missing opportunities to make holy the moments we are granted? To be present to the people around us. To be present to creation. To be present to ourselves.

To be present to the poor children we tend to miss? A poor African American child? A poor Syrian infant? A poor Palestinian? A poor child from Guatemala or Honduras? We quickly jump to our explanations of why it is not our responsibility to make holy space for a child. . . .To give gifts requiring a sacrifice of some sort? The wise travelers did not make excuses because they were seekers.

According to the story, the light of the star was available to all, but only a few took heed and followed. Great effort was required. Great effort is required of our epiphanies too. It's not just the Aha! moment. It's all the little moments that lead up to the insight. To the moment which we make holy by our attention, by our mindfulness to still ourselves and notice what God is doing in this holy moment.

These holy moments are often awkward because intimacy with God and God's creation is not status quo. It is the ordinary seen through an Epiphany lens. God is here. This moment is holy. We don't have to wish we were back in time with Jesus and Mary and Joseph, and the wise travelers. Our epiphany is now, when we stop and see this moment for what it is. A holy moment with the Creator redeeming and holding us in a peace which will never fail, because it doesn't depend on any of us. God is Good. Amen.