

Pastor Roy's Sermon from January 5, 2014 - Epiphany of Our Lord

The brilliance of the Light of Christ be with you all.

Matthew tells of the magi from the east coming to celebrate Christ's birth and give him gifts. The birth narratives of Matthew and Luke are an exclamation mark for the beginning of his Gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ. For Matthew its wise men and Joseph and angels and Herods wrath that there is another king besides him. For Luke there is Mary and angels and shepherds and angels in the field and by the manger and Anna and Simeon at the temple.

The stories are intended to grab our attention. This is no common man. This is no common biography, or prophet, or teacher.

Here is a mighty Epiphany. A great Aha! moment in which God's nature, compassion, and mercy—the life of God—the kingdom of God is revealed on earth. They tell us, if you do nothing else, pay attention to this.

Epiphany is when our eyes and ears are opened, as if for the first time. When the Spirit calls us to live, to be alive like we've never been before. To see and hear the wisdom of God all around us.

You know the story of the wise visitors. They bring epiphany.

That brings us to a personal question. What is your epiphany? --The moment when you realized you were in the presence of God. That now, you have a purpose in life. That God was calling you by name with words like, my child, my friend, peace, forgiveness, love, and hope. Epiphany invites us to catch a fresh glimpse of the light of God. To be inspired. To be refreshed. To see and hear and touch anew. How does that happen for you?

Perhaps a reminder of your baptism? Or your experience of being called to the vocation which has defined your life? Vocation to family? To community? A moment in time in which you realized that you matter—you heard a voice of mercy calling you to hope—to not give up, to seek peace even if everything felt crazy and hopeless—whether or not you measure up, or succeed, you could be a caring presence and live the life which was carved out for you. The bright light of Christ shining in your own life—for good.

Epiphany comes to us in the stories of Jesus' life, love, teachings, healings, willingness to die so that his life might be reborn in us in a way that redefines our own lives. We say alongside the magi and shepherds and prophetess and prophet and angels, “Yes, this is the one to watch.” This is the one whose spiritual life and practice is one to imitate. The epiphany of this Man and his God are a blessing to be sought and received with joy. We find meaning if we seek and are willing to follow where he leads.

Jesus calls us to follow the light. As in Advent we are called to be awake and to follow the voice of the Spirit. We have been given gifts which we can use to help and be present for one another in the church and the community. Every once in a while we have to reach down deep and push ourselves to practice these God given gifts, talents, interests, even hobbies for the sake of the relationships all around us—to give courage to the poor and depressed, to give hope to our neighbor, not by doing what we cannot do, but by doing what we long to be doing. To be and do what we know we were made to be and do. To follow the Spirit's call is to live fully in the goodness and light of God. This is Epiphany.

This is what it means to live, to love, to befriend, to relate. To shine with the brightness of God's light.

Epiphany is not about believing the right things, thinking the right things, it is about having good conversations, it's about relationships, some which just happen, and some into which we have to push ourselves a bit, so that the stuff of the Kingdom and Reign of God can happen. This is justice, kindness, and mercy. There can never be too much of these as long as they are accompanied by presence, by relationship. There is plenty of distrust, dishonesty, disappointment to go around.

We can inspire one another. We can get to know one another a bit better—here in this church, parish, and community. There is much joy and strength to be had if we will take the first step. If we will take the time to shine on one another. To see the hand of God at work in us—in the relationships. When we take the chance that God is calling us to be a holy presence. God is with us, revealing Godself to us and in us so that we and others can truly live.

What does this mean? What does it mean for God to shine forth in us and those around us, in good, healthy, whole relationships which give more than they ever hope to receive. And by giving in such a way, we find that we receive back so much more than we ever dreamed possible. Can we consecrate ourselves to the often difficult work of serving our neighbor, serving family and friends.

This is a dark time of the year. We need hope. We need to be reminded of goodness and mercy and peace. We need Epiphany. We waited through Advent. Press on into Epiphany. If you are seeking, continue to seek.

Keep a journal if it is helpful. What are you seeking? What light? What needs to be enlightened? Do you seek comfort? Do you seek a challenge? Purpose? Meaning?

Write, pray, be still and wait. . .

Then get to work. Follow the Holy Impulse to serve, to volunteer, wherever. . .however the Spirit is leading you. Sometimes a star will lead you to act. Sometimes doing will lead you to the star of your own Epiphany. God is at work. Graciously at work.

There are many ways to serve, if you want to bounce ideas off someone, talk to a friend, or give me a call. Also, New Hope ministries is always looking for new volunteers, as well as many other organizations in the area.

Thanks be to God for the Light which shines forth today. Amen.