

Service for the Feast of the Epiphany

Sunday 3rd January 2021



Wonderful Counsellor,
whose glory is beyond our understanding
and whose love is beyond measure:
Let us know your presence now.

Mighty God,
whose power girds creation
whose hands cradle the hills, yet whose mercy is boundless:
Let us know your presence now.

Prince of Peace,
whose righteousness is like the strong mountains
and whose justice is as the great deep:
Let us know your presence now.
Amen.

We sing the hymn - [Come and join the celebration](#)

Psalm 90.1-2

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.

2 Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Luke 12.13-21

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

14 Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" **15** Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. **17** He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'"

18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. **19** And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

21 "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Some thoughts as we enter a New Year

We have to admit we all make plans. Indeed our lives would be chaotic if we didn't. But who are we making the plans for?

In our gospel reading the plans are for the selfish and self satisfied farmer.

Will we hear the call of Jesus; where your heart is there is your treasure?

Many plans were made, indeed had to be made for anniversaries in 2020. There was the 75th anniversary of the ending of World War II, the centenary of the burial of the unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey. Inevitably these and many others took on a very different form.

So how could we approach the New Year of 2021?

I would say why not consider these words spoken by king George VI to the people of this country, the dominions and the empire for Christmas 1939. What horrors could there be awaiting them as the war developed? How many plans would be shattered? Yet these words shine as a beacon of hope.

George VI quoted this in his 1939 Christmas broadcast . The first Christmas of World war II.

'And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.

And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.'

A prayer of confession.

Holy God, we encounter you in our lives and try to follow faithfully,

but so often we get lost or turn away.

We try to love our neighbours and ourselves, and even, by your grace, to love our enemies,

but we fail.

We take the wrong path and stray from the way of your love,

Forgive us Lord, and guide us back to you.

Amen.

An assurance of pardon.

We turn to you, God of love, and

we accept your grace.

We accept your pardon.

We accept the gift of a new path,

through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

We say together the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father

Who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth, as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever and ever
Amen

We sing the hymn - [Like a candle flame](#)

This is the Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany.
So what is all that about you may ask?
Here is a clue, as we listen to this piece of music.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Epiphany is a Greek word meaning 'manifestation, showing forth, revelation.'
This feast proclaims our faith that in Jesus God is revealed to all people – not just to an inner circle or a chosen few, but to all people, in all places and throughout all time.
Christians believe that in the person of Jesus we see who God is and in the words and actions of Jesus we see God at work in the world.
Epiphany marks a series of occasions at which Jesus is revealed to be God's Son.
So in the Christian calendar for the next few weeks we see some of these 'revelations' as he is recognised as the Messiah by different people.
There is the visit of the wise men, his baptism, the wedding feast at Cana and ending with the transfiguration when his disciples see Jesus 'shining in his Glory'.
Watch out for some of these in the coming weeks.

Psalm 72.1-4

- 1** Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
- 2** May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
- 3** May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- 4** May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

Matthew 2.1-12

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4** When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8** He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11** On coming to the

house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

We sing the hymn - [As with gladness men of old](#)

A personal reflection

Question 1. Why these places?



It would seem obvious if this baby was special they would be born in somewhere special. It would be a grand place, who knows a palace. So we should not be surprised these visitors from the East went first to king Herod in his palace to ask did he know where this extraordinary baby was to be born. What a shock for them to discover the

baby Jesus, the Saviour of the world in a stable. The extraordinary in the most unbelievable of places. Yet they did what they had to and went on there way. Do I go looking for Jesus in the places where I expect him to be? Like his parent searching for the youngster in Jerusalem Jesus turns up in the most extraordinary places. Why do I go searching in all the wrong places? Because I imagine this is where Jesus should be. Jesus comes into the ordinary places of my life and wants to be there. Will I put him on a stand to admire? Will I try to follow his ways as an inspiring teacher? Will I let him into my life as my Lord and Saviour?

Question 2. Why these gifts?

Gold is given to remind everyone that Jesus is 'king forever, ceasing never.' In the book of Revelation 19.16 Jesus is the 'King of Kings.' Do I need to be reminded that Jesus is my king too?
Frankincense is given to remind everyone that Jesus is 'a deity nigh.' as an incense



it was used in religious ceremonies and it is there to say Jesus is divine. Do I need to be reminded that Jesus is the Son of God?

Myrrh is given to remind everyone that Jesus is going to die, 'the gathering gloom'. We can read the story of his death for ourselves in all four gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Do I need to be reminded that Jesus died for me?

These gifts tell us that Jesus is 'King and God and Sacrifice.'

And what is my response?

Christina Rossetti put it like this:

What can I bring him poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man I would do my part,
But what I can I give him, give my heart.

Question 3. Why these people?



It is a common quiz question: How many wise men, Magi, Kings were there?

The answer? Nobody knows!

There weren't necessarily 3 of them.

They weren't necessarily from the 'Orient' and they weren't necessarily kings.

We do know they came from a land east

of Judah; they were skilled in astrology and so they probably came from a land where astrology was prevalent. The Bible calls them 'Magi' which is a word used in the book of Daniel 2.2 for Babylonian astrologers. Babylon that some 500 years before had conquered Israel and taken them into exile.

They are in this story to remind us that strangers, people from foreign lands with no connection to the promises of Israel and possibly even former enemies are able to recognise the importance of the birth of Jesus and travel to be there.

This reminds me that any who feel estranged or unconnected with God can also be made welcome and can share in the celebration.

Do I feel not good enough? Am I too ashamed? Am I frightened of leaving things behind?

Look at all those who come to the manger. Remember the shepherds who went home rejoicing. So why not you?

Question 4. Why these journeys?

R.M.Benson wrote this; 'The wise men cannot return to their own country by the same way they used to come to Bethlehem.

While they cannot go the same route because of Herod, we cannot go the same way once we have met Jesus. We emerge from our encounter with Christ as changed people. We cannot follow the same path as before.

Like the wise men, we must seek out Jesus Christ, but we will always leave as transformed people.'



This is the testimony of all who have met and followed Jesus down the ages, from the first disciples to today.

So have you yet to meet Jesus?

Have you just been following the crowd, not really willing to go up and speak to Jesus?

Why not do so now?

You'll be surprised, like the shepherds and the wise men, how you are welcomed and accepted whatever you bring.

Come to the manger, kneel and worship and be changed. Say yes to Jesus.

We sing the hymn - [Who would think that what was needed](#)

Prayers of intercession

Our intercessions use the three gifts the magi brought as a focus:

First we think of gold which reminds us of Kings, and leadership more generally

We pray for our leaders - for our Queen, Prime Minister, Government ministers and MPs as critical decisions are made in the wake of Brexit, the continuing Covid crisis and other pressing matters in our nations life.

We pray too for leaders further afield with the transition of power from Donald Trump to Joe Biden in the USA, the powerful leaders in China, Russia and nations with ongoing conflict such as Yemen.

We pray for wisdom, compassion and courage for all those whose decisions affect the lives of many.

The second gift the magi brought was frankincense used in religious worship, which prompts us to pray for the church throughout the world.

We pray for all the denominations represented in Hornsea, giving thanks for their commitment to work together for the kingdom, and asking that each church will be blessed.

We pray for our church, its elders and other leaders, asking for wisdom about the way ahead for us, and the resources required to take things forward.

We remember too Christians elsewhere in this country and around the world struggling at this time - perhaps impacted by Covid, or persecution, or other challenges.

Lord refresh, renew, encourage and equip your church we pray that we may be a positive witness to your saving love, and through us others may be reached.

The third gift the magi brought was myrrh, representing suffering and death
So we pray for all today carrying heavy burdens - perhaps suffering physically, or mentally, perhaps ill themselves or supporting someone else, perhaps close to death, or bereaved.

From our church prayer book we name

As we lift these to God we also bring to Him others especially on our hearts and minds this morning, saying their names silently or out loud as we prefer.

Zara,

Brenda

Ruth, Malcolm and family.

Lesley

Eileen

Norman, Hayden and all the family of Don who died this week

Fiona and family

Surround O lord we pray each of these we have named out loud or in the silence of our hearts and remember too all those who have no one to name or care for them. We know they too are precious in your sight and loved.

At the beginning of this new year we bring ourselves to God and ask for His presence with us through whatever this year holds for us.

Do join with the repeated response "watch over me and protect me" if you wish

In life's choices and circumstance,

watch over me, and protect me.

In my coming and going, in light and darkness,

watch over me, and protect me.

In hesitancy and fear, uncertainty and rebellion,

watch over me, and protect me.

In testing and pain, in danger and doubt,

watch over me, and protect me.

In bearing good news, in breaking new ground,

watch over me, and protect me.

Alone or with others, be they friend or enemy,

watch over me, and protect me.

In carrying your light, in combating darkness,

watch over me, and protect me.

In healing and freedom and life-giving blessing,

watch over me, and protect me.

In comfort or challenge, to rescue and save,

watch over me, and protect me.

In all my beginnings, and at each ending,

watch over me, and protect me.

Amen

We sing the hymn - [See him lying on a bed of straw](#)

Blessing

Jesus, you revealed yourself to the world so that all people might look to you and
be saved:

May we know the wholeness that you bring.

Be our light in the darkness that we may not stumble, and lift us again if we fall.

The Saviour of the nations has come to light our way and heal our wounds.

To God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be praise forever, and may we know that
blessing of the gift beyond words.

Amen.

