



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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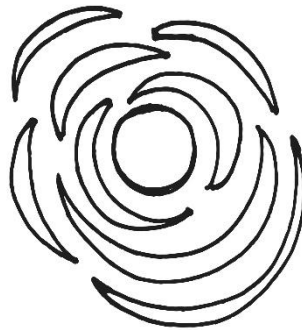
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Epiphany of Our Lord

January 5, 2025

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

The feast of Epiphany (“manifestation”) concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God’s love to all people.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God’s Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God’s mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran Church worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hə́nq̓əmiṇə́m̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together in this New Year to worship and celebrate, led by God's justice, strength, and love, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. He is our King who rules with righteousness and blessing. He is our Saviour who stands with us, defends us, and rescues us from all that oppresses. He is the Light who has come into the world like rain to water the earth, allowing it to flourish in righteousness and abundance of peace. So let us bow down and worship our God, who is full of compassion as our Deliverer and Redeemer, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: The First Noel (#300)

GREETING

The grace of Jesus Christ our Light, the shining love of God, and the glorious communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy and Radiant God, through the light of a star you drew your people near to Christ, and revealed the mystery of your eternal grace for all humanity. Empower us as your church to reflect this light onto all we encounter, that the glory of your name be seen and felt throughout the world, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 60:1-6

A reading from Isaiah.

Jerusalem is assured that nations will make a pilgrimage to her because the light of God's presence is in her midst. The bountiful food of the sea and the profits of international trade will come streaming to Jerusalem and thereby declare God's praise.

- ¹ Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
- ² For darkness shall cover the earth
and thick darkness the peoples,
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
- ³ Nations shall come to your light
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
- ⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together; they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms.
- ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you;
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
- ⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;

all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's son;
² **that he may rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;**
³ that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
⁴ **Let him defend the needy among the people,
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**
⁵ May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.
⁶ **Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,
like showers that water the earth.**
⁷ In his time may the righteous flourish;
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.
¹⁰ **May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles pay tribute,
and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.**
¹¹ May all kings bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.
¹² **For the king delivers the poor who cry out in distress,
the oppressed, and those who have no helper.**
¹³ He has compassion on the lowly and poor,
and preserves the lives of the needy.
¹⁴ **From oppression and violence he redeems their lives,
and precious is their blood in his sight.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 3:1-12

A reading from Ephesians.

What had been hidden from previous generations is now made known through the gospel ministry of Paul and others. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles participate in the richness of God's promised salvation.

¹ This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you gentiles, ² for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you ³ and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴ a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵ In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ that is, the gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was

given to me to bring to the gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,¹² in whom we have access in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem,² asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage."³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him,⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was.¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O God, by your Spirit, draw us to your light, your Word, and the hope in your love, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As I mentioned before, we're celebrating the Day of Epiphany today when it's really tomorrow. Just like how Christmas every year is on December 25th, the Day of the Epiphany is always 12

days after that, on January 6th. Today is supposed to be the 2nd Sunday of Christmas, because it lands within that 12 days of Christmas where we get that popular song with the hard to remember lyrics from. Sure, Christmas days 1 to 5 aren't bad but as soon as you get to the 6th day of Christmas, it all seems to fall apart. Anyway, just to reiterate, today isn't actually the Day of the Epiphany per se, but it is the Sunday that we'll be remembering the Epiphany.

I thought recognising the Epiphany was important enough to change the schedule like this for a couple of reasons. The first is that we don't always get this story of the Magi visiting young Jesus on a Sunday, and so we don't get the "true" details that are often misrepresented in the other non-12-days-of-Christmas songs like We Three Kings (which we didn't sing today), and even the 3rd and 5th verses of The First Noel (which we did sing today). I always like to shatter those images that we have from our childhood and literally every single Nativity scene diorama of the 3 Wise Men at the stable when Jesus was born.

Another reason I changed it is because the text for this 2nd Sunday of Christmas is John chapter 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" and so on and so forth. We just got that text on Christmas Eve, and while I didn't preach a sermon on it then, I sure did on Christmas Day, when we got that same text again. So I didn't want to have you all have to hear yet another sermon on the topic. Nothing against the text at all, but more against my preaching on it. I can only say the same thing so many times.

So, then, here we are, Epiphany.

It's a day we've heard of, of course, as we have this whole season in the church calendar that is based on it... sort of. But it's not a day that know much about, as it's not like Christmas or Easter level special for the church as not many people make that extra effort to come out for a mid-week Epiphany service if we were to have one, let alone a non-January 6th Sunday designated to observe the Epiphany. Sure, we might be somewhat familiar with the story that this day revolves around, but like I said, that is mostly from the songs that we sing and not from the actual story that we get in our bibles.

For example, if I were to ask you how many Magi there were, what would you say? When did they first see Jesus? Who even are they to care enough to go?

Very quickly the typical answers would be three, the night he was born, and they were Magi/wise men/kings. And that's just going by the songs. Tradition in the church over the years goes even further and gives them names, exactly where they came from, and even how long they travelled to get there. Which by the way is 12 days, which again is why we have 12 days of Christmas as well as Epiphany landing on today (I mean tomorrow).

But none of that was even included in the story, was it. No where in today's reading do we get their names, their quantity, or what their profession actually is. The text is silent on how long it took them to get to see Jesus, how old he was at the time, and even where they're really from. We don't even know if they're kings or not.

Sure, we can make educated guesses. They are called "Magi", where we get the terms "magic" and "magician" from, which would suggest that they're mystics of some sort. We hear they like looking at stars so they could be astronomers or even astrologers. We know they travelled from afar with some lavish gifts so they were probably rich. But the fact of the matter is, we

just don't know much about them. Again, that didn't stop people from making assumptions and writing songs about them, but all we really know is that they were foreigners, they were misled by King Herod, and they brought gifts with them that were fit for the distinguished, the divine, as well as the dead. A strange combination of tributes for a child, you have to admit.

And this is where I wish we did know more about the Magi, rather than just making up arbitrary guesses and putting them to music. Like, what did they hear and know about Jesus? Why were they so interested? And how were they able to distinguish the star they followed against all the other billions of stars out there?

These are all interesting questions that I wish were added to the text that we get. But maybe Matthew not bothering with those details tell us that, while it'd be cool to know, it doesn't really matter. I mean, these folk of course do matter to their families and communities, but to this story those details that we might be wondering about could just be inconsequential to the point that it's trying to make.

Like whenever it was that they actually got to Jesus doesn't matter as much as them actually getting to Jesus. Whatever quantity of them made the journey isn't as important as these foreigners making the journey at all. Them being kings or not doesn't change the fact that they encountered the one true King. They may have had to sift through the other kings and powers, but they got there eventually.

So then I wonder if the lesson for this Epiphany is just that, the epiphany of the true King, our realisation of what power in God's righteousness looks like, our understanding of what it means to be God's people in the world, and the revelation that this truth isn't just for us who we consider to be on the inside, but it is for all people of all walks and backgrounds and upbringing.

See this story of God with us isn't supposed to be only for the select and elite few. This gospel of Jesus isn't to be hidden behind walls that we think are going to protect and preserve us as we are or what we might think we are. This good news of a baby born to us, showing us true kingship in humility, true strength in graciousness, and true love through service and sacrifice, is for *all people*.

That can be hard to hear in a world that is so divided. It can be difficult to accept that God doesn't hate the same people that we do. It's almost impossible to comprehend such a grace that would love even *them*. You know who I'm talking about. The outsiders. The marginalized. The less affluent or cultured as we are. The ones different from us.

Or.

Those who disagree with us. Those who don't see the world the way we see it. Those who threaten and hurt us. Those that we consider to be evil.

God came to the world as a baby for them too. God through the actions of Jesus Christ saves them too. God as a benevolent and gracious God, loves them too. Just as God loves us.

As hard to hear as this might be, it is the truth. It is the truth that drew the Magi westward. It is the truth that Herod decided to reject and unsuccessfully put an end to. It is the truth that shines onto and into all of us, releasing us from the burdens and prejudices of the world, opens

our eyes to see the radiance of God that calls us into God's kingdom, community, and arms of love, and sets us free.

So that begs the question, what will we do with this truth that draws us near to God? We can turn away like Herod and believe that our way is better, our power is for us to keep, and that our enemies and anything that threatens our privilege need to be punished. Or, like the strange and mysterious Magi, we can turn to the truth, look full into the wonderful light, and see the things of this world growing strangely dim in the promise of God's glory and grace.

When we encounter the living Christ, we are changed. Like the Magi, our paths change. The way we see the world and all that is in it, changes. And that is the point of the Epiphany.

So on this day of the Epiphany, or the day we observe the Epiphany at least, and throughout this upcoming season after the Epiphany and beyond, may our own epiphany match that of the Magi, to see the truth of who Jesus is, who he came to save, and who is welcome in God's glorious arms of grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Arise, Your Light Has Come! (#314)

CREED

With all those touched by the light of Christ, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Dwelling in the presence of God with us, let us boldly pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "in your radiant mercy, O Lord," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Drawn to your light, O God, we rise as your people in the world who live, serve, and spread your peace and joy. Help us to see you active in and around our lives, that we can recognise

the glory of your name that strengthens us for your ministry. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Drawn into the brightness of your presence, O God, we pray that Christ be proclaimed in, through, and in spite of our words and deeds. Be with all who minister to others, that the light of your love shine throughout the world. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Barbara Groote; and for all the shared ministries in BC and beyond. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Drawn into the glory of your creation, O God, we pray for all the earth, for nature, for the seas and the skies. Grant to every living thing abundant resources, clean water, and sustainable harvests, and may all receive them fairly through responsible and equitable stewardship. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Drawn to the radiance of your justice, O God, we pray for the nations of the world and their leaders, that we all might act responsibly to feed the world, and not to just feed the hunger for power. Reveal your compassion and peace for the sake of all who live in the shadow of oppression, violence, and fear. We pray especially for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; Solyana Amanuel; and Filimon Abraha; as well as for those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Hailie, and their children. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Drawn into the glow of your love, O God, we pray for all who wait for relief and healing in mind, body, and spirit. Give us hope in the promise of new life in your name and eternal kingdom. We pray especially for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Debbie; Beulah; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Bishop Kathy; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Hwee Yang; Ephraim; Georgina; Teddy and family; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Drawn into your promise of everlasting light, O God, we give thanks for all the saints who rest in the brightness of your presence. May we draw confidence from the lives of faith of the past, that our lives now might reflect your love with eternal praise. In your radiant mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the light of your love, grace, and mercy, shining through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ; who brings to the world a light that breaks through the darkness, drawing us all into its glorious radiance, that we might be joined with the choirs of angels, the church on earth, and the hosts of heaven, in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

You are indeed holy, O God, and you raise us up, shine on us your glory, and your light radiates through us onto all the nations. For you lift all eyes up, drawing us to your Son, who is the very brightness of your dawn on high, your light that comes to the world, the light that no darkness can overtake, the light of your love made tangible and real and full of forgiveness and grace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it with them saying, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for them to drink from and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this bread and cup that we see the light of Christ shining in and around us, even as we declare the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

To you, be all glory and honour, O God, for you are the light to all nations, lifting us up out of darkness and into your radiant kingdom, joining us in community, uniting us as one body, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Led into unity with one another by the light of Christ, let us pray as he taught us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see, the light of Christ in our lives.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)
Drawn to the Light (#593)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Glorious God, with all the diversity in the world you lead us to see Jesus in the ordinary and extraordinary, where we are filled with blessing and peace. Be with us always, that our lives might be a blessing onto others and that your light be reflected in and around us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the blessing of God shine brightly in you, the love of Christ shine radiantly through you, and the peace of the Holy Spirit shine brilliantly all around you, now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG: Jesus, the Light of the World (ACS #914)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, rejoice in the light of God's love.
Thanks be to God.

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