

Reflection for Epiphany 2025. Matthew 2: 1-12

Epiphany is one of those important times that is often overlooked. Christmas decorations go up earlier and earlier, so by now everyone has had enough and is eager to move on. The Epiphany is the time when we remember the showing of the Christ child to the world. The acceptance of the Christ child for who He is, as the wise men come to acknowledge Him. It is only in Matthew that we read of these Wise Men, the intellectuals of the time, astrologers who look for the signs in the stars and follow a previously unknown star to seek out the child Jesus. They come looking for something, they know not what until they reach Bethlehem. They are Wisemen not Kings; the idea of Kings coming to lay their gifts comes from Isaiah, who mentions gifts of gold and frankincense. Isaiah sees God's revelation, a time of vindication for his people, a time of great rejoicing, a time for generosity, the giving of gifts, for worship. Over time this concept has moved, we now give gifts to each other, we celebrate with each other, families and friends come together at Christmas. If we do remember Epiphany at all it, is to weave a great story of Kings with names which come from legend, not from the Gospel. School nativity plays have tinsel bedecked Kings arriving with their gifts; all very entertaining but do they lose the actual meaning.

The Wise men come seeking, they study their almanacs, they watch the stars, they know something is happening. They seek for something they do not know, but they realise is important. They come in worship, as they lay down their gifts they are acknowledging that in this tiny child there is a far greater power than they or anyone else has ever known. We too come seeking, we may think that with our superior knowledge that we know everything, but it is only as we kneel before the Christ child in humility that we become aware of our ignorance and powerlessness.

The story of the Wisemen is about the challenge of God's coming. God's kingship is not what we might expect, why would Jesus be born in a wayside shelter? God's revelation is blindingly unpredictable; it is only when the wise men arrive that they know that they have found what they are looking for and are overwhelmed with joy and go home satisfied. We pray that we, too, may be overwhelmed with joy as we see the presence of God in this child lying in a manger.

Through your mysterious inspiration, Lord,

you led the wise men on their journey

to discover the new-born Saviour of all.

Following the light of a star they travelled,

Lord, from darkness into light.

So guide us this day from the darkness

of our confused and fractious world into your wonderful light.

In the light of your presence

help us to experience his kindness and blessings,

make us strong in faith, in hope and in love.

Amen