

## An Epiphany meditation

Epiphany: a sudden realization; a fresh light; a seeing of depths, of meanings, of some sense in a bewildering world; perhaps an experience of the divine. The Day of the Epiphany of Our Lord is the gateway to the variable time (not, technically, a season) following the fixed twelve days of Christmas and preceding the fixed forty days of Lent.

The gospel text for the Day of Epiphany (January 6<sup>th</sup>) tells the story of gentile Wise Men of old following a sign in order to discover new wisdom (Matthew). However, remember that apparently Jewish shepherds got there first and that a woman, Mary, had an epiphany before them all (Luke). The Gospels level the playing field of our lives: whether seer or shepherd, whether Jew or gentile, whether female or male, we all come to moments of epiphany simply and sufficiently with whatever we have and whoever we are. The presumed advantages of wealth, knowledge, race, and gender no longer count – if they ever truly did – or may even work against us. My comfortable middle-class status, my educational credentials, my color and ethnicity, and my being male are all – at best – beside the point or – at worst – disadvantageous in this matter.

Epiphanies – with their light, wisdom, and understanding – are in short supply these days. Information overwhelms us. Competing visions stir up discord and even violence. Confusion, not coherence, reigns. Two questions from the narrative of a Christmas Vespers service presented at Texas Lutheran University some fifteen years ago are even more pressing now: “Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And where is the place of understanding?” We suspect that we may know the answer but, unlike the Wise Men, we’d rather not go there. It is this: God continues, as of old, to be incarnated among the poor and oppressed. God’s light shines in the darkness – yet typically in the wrong neighborhoods, on the wrong side of the tracks, on the wrong side of our borders, on the wrong side of principles and values that are biased and self-serving. Will we see the light on the day of and during the weeks following Epiphany? Will we be positioned to see it?

Let us pray:

*Lord,*

*what shall we give you, in costly devotion?  
Shall we bring incense and off’rings divine,  
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,  
myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?*

*Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
vainly with gifts would your favor secure;  
richer by far is the heart’s adoration,  
dearer to you are the prayers of the poor.*

*Amen.*

(From hymn #303, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*; altered)