

2021 January 03

Epiphany of the Lord

Reading:

First: Isaiah 60.1-6, "Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples." (2a)

The Psalm: 72, "He delivers the needy one who calls, the poor and the one who has no helper." (12)

Second: Ephesians 3.2-6, "The Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body... in Christ." (6)

The Gospel: Matthew 2.1-12, "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem." (1)

God of all Nations and Races

Arise and shine! This is not just a prophecy by Isaiah, but a call and command from God through the Prophet. When God's people shine reflecting his glory the nations of the world will see the light and glory of God. When they refuse to arise and shine for God, his glory suffers. We who are made children of God and are believers need to shine, not for our sake but for the sake of God, in order that God's dominion, power, and glory are known to a world immersed in darkness.

If the world remains in deep darkness today it is because we do not shine enough. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "*You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world.*" (Matthew 5.13&14) Perhaps many aspects of Prophet Isaiah's words are fulfilled in a different sense than they were meant. Nations, kings and peoples did see our brightness and our shining not because we shine and reflect God's glory, but because of our greed to conquer, plunder, and enrich ourselves at others' expense. Our 'sons come from far away' not as conquerors for God, but for themselves. Our 'daughters might have been carried on the arms of their nurses', who were captured or purchased as slaves. 'The abundance of the sea and the wealth of nations' have come to us through our military conquest. We need to examine if we shine for God by reflecting his glory or if we darken his glory through carrying on with our ancestry of evil doing.

Does God's glory shine upon the Gentiles through our shining before them, or are we rich and famous through our greedy conquests not of their hearts but of their possessions? The shining star on the sky was the first revelation of God's glory on, and his invitation to, the Gentiles through the wise men of the East. They shine even today before us as examples of faith. They responded promptly to the inspiration of God and deeply commit themselves to search for the truth of God's revelation. Do we care a bit and respond to such inspirations? Or better, do we allow ourselves to be inspired by God?

The star made its first stop at the palace of Herod, the king of the Jews at Jerusalem, away from Bethlehem where Jesus was born. This was an information and invitation to Herod and his palace buddies to accept the long awaited Messiah and to shine with and for him. They refused to arise and shine and discarded or belittled the message conveyed to them by which they became the losers. However, God's work is still carried on in the world. Hundreds and thousands of missionaries all over the world follow the Star, cross over the boundaries of oceans and mountains, and win over the hearts of people for Christ and his kingdom. The boundaries of his kingdom go on expanding. Let us allow the Epiphany to continue today in and through us by welcoming Christ into lives and families!

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

