

# Epiphany

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 06 January 2019

Preacher: Rev. Will Alvarez

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning Christchurch. Good morning. It's that time of year again isn't it? Where everyone has started to make New Year's resolutions. Can I get like a show of hands to see how many people so far have made a New Year's resolution?

One? Crikey. Two? Three? Out of you who have made one, how many of you so far have kept your New Year's resolutions?

One? Some people have already failed. So here are some facts. So 22% of people fail their New Year's resolutions after a single week.

And only 9% succeed in actually keeping their resolution all year. But hopefully, if you've already failed then it's okay. I'll give you a new one hopefully within the next 10 minutes.

So today is also Epiphany. But what is Epiphany all about? I asked my mum this. She's normally my guinea pig when I ask people things.

[ 1 : 08 ] And I asked mum, right mum what do you think Epiphany is? And she said it's that day when Christmas is over and we remember and celebrate the three kings.

I mean, that's pretty much bang on really. Except we don't actually know if there was exactly three people who went to see Jesus.

And we weren't sure if they were kings or not. But actually, she's not too far off. But in reality, there is much more to Epiphany than this.

So why do we actually celebrate it? Epiphany is about Jesus' contact with the wise men. But the question is, why is this important?

Why was that contact with wise men important? This is important because it was Jesus' first contact with the Gentiles. And the Gentiles were the non-Jewish people at the time.

[ 2 : 07 ] But then, I suppose it's also important to ask, why is this important? Why is this contact important? It was because at that time, God had only really had contact with the Jews regularly at this point in history.

So I suppose we can ask again, why is this important? Why is that important? It's because it was symbolic of what was to come. The wise men from the East recognised that it was God that was leading them to someone who was worthy of being worshipped.

And later on, we would see this baby, this Jesus. He would later go on to make a sacrifice that meant it was possible for not just the Jews, but for everyone, including us, to have a relationship with God.

So again, I would just like to stress the importance of Epiphany. It's almost like a prelude. And that through Jesus, everyone, including us, can have a relationship with God.

So what actually happened in the story of Epiphany? So first, we see the Magi arrive from the East, being directed by a star.

[ 3 : 19 ] It's not really explained how they knew to come, but we just know that God worked through them and they just saw this star and they knew it was special and they followed it.

And eventually, they come from the East and they end up appearing to King Herod, telling him that there is going to be a baby who was born, who is going to be king, or in the Bible it says, the anointed one.

So Herod probably wasn't quite so thrilled at this news, considering he was the king at the time. And he asked his priest where this Messiah was to be born. And they said that, Herod's priest said that Micah had predicted and prophesied that the baby was to be born in Bethlehem.

So there Herod goes. He sends this Magi off and they find this baby and they arrive bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Again, we don't actually know what these gifts symbolise, because the Bible doesn't actually directly say and give a symbolic meaning to them.

[ 4 : 37 ] But from ancient history, we can tell that these are expensive gifts and these are gifts that are worthy for a king.

So what we know is that frankincense is a white fragrant resin that was burned and used in worship as an offering to God, symbolising that, or could be, that Jesus was the son of God.

So we see myrrh being brought. And myrrh was a spice that was used in Embarnam, which could prefigure the death that he was going to receive.

And, of course, the other gift they brought was gold. And we all know what gold is. Gold is gold. It's a very expensive metal and is a symbol of divinity and royalty.

But ultimately, we don't exactly know what the meaning of each specific gift is. Other than that, it was really important. This baby was really, really important and was going to be a king.

[ 5 : 41 ] But the next part of the story is really interesting. So we see the Magi, after seeing Jesus, they returned via a different route after being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod.

And this is really, really brave because Herod was not really a nice guy. We can see in history that Herod ended up killing three of his own sons.

He was brutal. So to actually actively oppose the king and to just go home a different way and not to go back to Herod, that was really, really brave.

And by doing this, they risked their own lives. So that is the story of Epiphany, really. And as we look Epiphany back in hindsight, we can see that the reason the Magi came was to show us that not just the Jews, but us as well, that we can have a relationship with God through Jesus.

So the question I want to ask you today is, where are you on your relationship with God this new year? Maybe you've never had a relationship with God.

[ 7 : 02 ] This is actually a bit of a two-way thing. So it might actually be that this new year might be the first time you ever try it. Who knows?

It could change your life. I know it's changed mine and so many other people's. But I would invite you, if you haven't had before a relationship with God, to just try it.

Maybe you have had a relationship with God for a while. But recently, due to something like business or a really tragic event, you've lost communication with him.

I would just like you to remember that God is there all the time and he's willing to bring comfort to you if you look to him. Or maybe you've been a Christian for a long time.

Maybe your resolution should be just to be a little bit braver. Because you have no idea the impact that you can make on someone's life. So for those of you that don't know, I'm the youth worker here.

[ 8 : 07 ] And back in September, we started doing, well, started continuing doing the Christian Union in Cleveland School. And what this is, is basically young people come along and we talk a bit about God.

We give them some donuts and they're all happy. In September, this girl turns up and she's with a group of friends and she strides into the room and she says, Look, I'm an atheist. I don't want to talk about God.

I'm not here for that. I'm just here for the donuts. We said, OK, that's fine. That's fine. Just come along and just sit and talk.

So she was just there chatting with a few friends. And after, I'd say, two, three, four weeks, she began to realise that, you know, Christians weren't so bad after all.

And she became a bit more open and starts to talk. So we asked this young year seven girl. We asked her, why? So why are you an atheist?

[ 9 : 14 ] And she said, well, it's because my mum and dad are. And she was very clear, like, they are right. My mum and dad are atheists. There is definitely no God.

And then it was really, really interesting because we saw her as she was, like, going through all this in her mind. She got to a point where she sort of stopped. And then she carried on and said, well, actually, my grandparents, I really love them, but they're Christians.

And so maybe, maybe there is a God. Maybe, maybe there is. Anyway, so since then, she has become much more open to talking about God.

And I just want to say, like, you have no idea the impact that you can have on the people around you. Like, that young girl, she saw something in her grandparents that resembled God, that

resembled Christ.

And that whatever she saw was willing to help her change her views, to change her life. So maybe, I mean, it might have been one of someone's grandchildren in here, but you have no idea the impact that you can make on young people.

[ 10 : 36 ] So, yes, that's one New Year's resolution as well we could do. It's just to be a bit braver and to actually talk about this sort of stuff to young people or our family members or even the postmen.

Because you have no idea the impact you can make on other people.