

# Epiphany Sunday

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Date: 07 January 2018

[0:00] Amen. Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So, a blessed epiphany to you, my brothers and sisters.

So what is this epiphany thing all about? I'm afraid it's one of the feasts of the liturgical year that we tend to treat as an afterthought. We get Christmas, we get Easter, we get Pentecost, we get all of those, but what is epiphany?

It probably doesn't help that there is no epiphany, Bonnie, and no one sends epiphany cards. Now, we know that it has something to do with wise men, but that might leave us even more puzzled at what it's getting at.

And as I think some of the wives in the congregation might attest, the phrase wise men is something of an oxymoron. That was bad, I'm sorry.

[1:29] Shame on me. But, in all seriousness, what do these wise men represent? Let's start with what we know about them, which probably isn't as much as we think we do.

We don't even know for a fact that there are three of them. But here's the important thing to know about the wise men. They were Gentiles.

They were not Jews. They saw the star in the sky that proclaimed the birth of Christ, who was King of the Jews, and they came from a foreign land. For what purpose? The text tells us, doesn't it?

To worship Him. Now, these men were likely foreign priests or court advisors coming from afar to worship the Lord Jesus. Isn't that amazing?

Working through this star, the Lord revealed something extraordinary to these men. That the king had been born, and that he was the sort of king that they should travel a great distance to pay homage to.

[2:37] They realized that he was worth the trip. What does that tell us? When we stop and think about it. It tells us that this king, the Lord Jesus, is a king who was intended for all people, intended to be revealed to all people.

We just celebrated his birth at Christmas, so what are we celebrating now? We are celebrating that God has revealed the glory of Jesus Christ. And that Christ, the king, the son of God, is meant for all people everywhere.

And that the nations have seen his glory. It is not hidden. It has been revealed. And that's a message that our world needs now as much as ever.

That Jesus, God's king, God's promised redeemer, has been revealed for everyone, everywhere.

This morning, I want us to consider this amazing truth, what it means for us, what it means for our world.

First, because we live in a culture that has been described as post-Christian. I don't like the sound of that, do you?

[3:52] Secular culture that has pushed back against its Christian roots. We, in our culture, need the reminder more than ever that God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Because for centuries, we've been hearing the voices of philosophers and scholars who would suggest that Christianity is obsolete and that God is dead.

We hear the voice of those who would tell us that if God isn't dead, God is at least silent. But I am here to tell you this morning, God is not dead and God is not silent.

How do I know? Because Jesus Christ has been revealed as God in the flesh, as God's chosen king, and he is alive and reigns forevermore.

Some in our culture will try to say, we know all of that supernatural stuff that we used to believe in is a bunch of rubbish. We're sophisticated people who have set aside such foolish and childish things.

Plus, here's the trouble. If God really exists, why wouldn't he show himself? Why wouldn't he give us a sign? In the epiphany, we see this awesome truth.

[5:06] God exists and God has shown his very glory. God gave us a sign. By becoming a human being, by becoming one of us. God isn't the problem.

The hardness of the human heart is the problem. God revealed his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. And what did we do about it? We killed him. Now, fortunately, a little thing like that isn't going to stop God's plan.

No, instead, we got another sign. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, attested to by hundreds of witnesses. God is not dead. No thanks to us.

We tried that and it didn't take. But do you want to see the glory of God? Do you want to see that God is alive?

Do you want to see the King who will reign forever and ever? The answer is simple. Look to the one who was born in Bethlehem. Look to the one who was crucified at Calvary.

[6:09] Look to the one who rose again and lives forever. Look to the one who ascended to heaven and is even now reigning in glory at the right hand of his Father.

Look at the one who is coming again to establish his kingdom, to gather in all who believe in his name from every nation, every tribe, every tongue. Do you want to see the glory of God?

Do you want to see what God is like? Do you want to see God's revelation? The answer is simple. Look to Jesus Christ. Follow the example of the wise man.

Come before him. Bow down and worship. And you will see God's glory. And we realize, of course, that not everyone has followed the example of the wise man.

Some have refused to believe and some have never even heard of this King Jesus. We live in a world where thick darkness covers the earth, where thick darkness covers the peoples of the earth.

[7:14] What do we do about that? We read in Isaiah 60 this morning, Rise, shine, for your light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

To quote one of our favorite songs from this year's VBS, Rise and shine and give God the glory, glory. That about sums it up, doesn't it?

But in all seriousness, what do we do? As believers, we are called to shine. We are called to reflect the glory of this King who has been revealed to us. Now, here's an honest question.

Are we doing that? This theme of epiphany, this reminder that the glory of the Lord, the revelation of Christ, has gone out into all the world, all of this asks something of us, doesn't it?

Aren't we called to shine, to make the glory of the Lord known among the peoples and the nations? How do we do that? Well, I think we do that through our Christian witness, through leading lives that shine in the darkness of this fallen world, and by bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only truly good news that cannot be overcome by the darkness.

[8:31] That's what we do. Lately, I've been reading through Martin Lloyd-Jones' classic work, Studies on the Sermon on the Mount. He highlights the Sermon on the Mount as a description of what Christians are meant to be.

He says that if we were living in the way that Scripture calls us to, the great revival for which we are praying and longing would have already started.

Amazing and astounding things would happen, the world would be shocked, and men and women would be drawn and attracted to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. There's a challenge.

Lloyd-Jones says again in a later chapter, and I want us to think about how these words might apply to us. Christian people, you and I are living in the midst of men and women who are in a state of gross darkness.

They will never have any light anywhere in this world, except from you and from me and the gospel we believe and teach. They are watching us. Do they see something different about us?

[9:40] Are our lives a silent rebuke to them? Do we so live as to lead them to come and ask us, why do you always look so peaceful? How is it you are so balanced?

How can you stand up to things as you do? Why is it you are not dependent upon artificial aids and pleasures as we are? What is this amazing thing that you have got?

If they do, we can tell them that wondrous, amazing, but tragically neglected news that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and to give men a new nature and a new life and to make them children of God.

Christian people are the light of the world today. Let us live and function as children of the light.

Well, that's convicting, isn't it?

I think that pretty well summarizes the command to arise and to shine because our light has come. We are to arise and shine to reflect the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[10:47] Or are we due in that? That's an important question, isn't it? We talk about the glory of God being revealed to the nations, and it has been. We also have to admit that each one of us probably has friends or co-workers or neighbors or even family members who don't know Christ.

Some of them may have been in churches without having ever heard or understood the gospel. Because the reality is that much of what passes for Christianity does not communicate the glory of the gospel.

That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. People might have heard of Jesus without having seen his glory. People might have heard about Jesus, might have been told that Jesus wants them to be nice, but never have heard the gospel truth.

That we are sinners who desperately need a Savior. That there is forgiveness to be found at the cross. And that there is new life in Christ and in him alone. If they have never heard that, they have never seen the glory of God revealed in Christ.

So the challenge goes to us, my brothers and sisters. Will we live in such a way as to reflect the glory of Jesus? Will we tell people about Christ and what he has done for us?

[12:12] Now the difficulty, of course, is that we can't reflect his glory if we aren't beholding his glory ourselves. If you want to see the glory of God in Christ, where do you go?

I'll give you a hint. The scriptures, his word. Don't you also go to your knees in prayer?

Don't you also go to worship with your brothers and sisters to gather together at the Lord's table in the breaking of bread? Without taking advantage of the opportunity to spend time with Jesus in these ways.

The hard truth is that we're simply not going to reflect his glory in the way that we're called to do. Not long ago, I saw a meme on Facebook where someone is crying out, God, why won't you speak to me?

And you see kind of the cartoon bubble of a voice from heaven saying, I have, read your Bible. Read your Bible. If you feel that you aren't hearing from God in your life, that you aren't beholding his glory, it's often because you're not spending time in his word.

[13:31] I remember when I was a seminarian hearing one of our seminary retreat speakers talk about this problem. Now, he was a bishop. And it wasn't unheard of for his clergy, some of them sometimes, to come to him to tell him they were discouraged with their ministries and they felt like giving up.

When that happened, he would ask them, So when did you stop reading your Bible and spending time in prayer? From what he told us, that was pretty much always the root of the problem.

I can't say I'm terribly surprised by that. But that's not just true for ordained clergy. That's true for all of us. Granted, sometimes our lives can be difficult and get us down.

But if there is an ongoing lack of spiritual fruit in our lives, if there is an ongoing lack of Christian joy and contentment in our walk, we pretty much see the answer.

Dig into the Word. Spend time with the Lord in prayer. And for that matter, if you'd like to do that and you don't really know how to get started or you need someone to walk with you, if you're having any sort of trouble, come and see me and we'll work on it together.

[14:44] I personally found that having someone to walk alongside me helps to develop consistent patterns in doing that. With that being said, this morning, my brothers and sisters, this Feast of the Epiphany, we rejoice.

We rejoice that Christ has been revealed as Lord of all, as Savior of the world, so we follow the wise men to Christ and with them we bow and we worship.

We take up the call to reflect the glory of Christ to a world that remains imprisoned in darkness. Because of that, to sum it up, let's take Epiphany seriously.

My brothers and my sisters, seek to behold the glory of Christ. Seek to live a life that is transformed by His glory. Seek to share that glory with the unbelieving world that people everywhere might behold His glory and be saved.

our light has come, His name is Jesus, and He is glorious. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[16:00] and I'm not for the answer. I'm not for the best I'm not for the most you in the name of the Son, of the Son, and I'm for the most I'm for the most I'm for the most I'm for the most I'm for the

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