

Epiphany I

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Date: 11 January 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Our gospel reading this morning shows us an epiphany, a revelation of who Jesus is and why he came.

! When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents brought him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. After the feast ended, Mary and Joseph began their journey home, not realizing that Jesus had stayed behind in the temple.

When they found him three days later, sitting among the teachers, Mary said to him, Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have sought you anxiously.

Jesus answered with words that reveal everything. In Luke chapter 2 verse 49 tells us, he said, Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?

This is an epiphany, a manifestation, a revelation of who this child is and what he came to do. He is in the temple at Passover and he speaks of his father's business.

[1 : 20] These details matter because they tell us that Jesus came to fulfill the work of sacrifice. Passover was the feast when God's people remembered their deliverance from Egypt through the blood of lambs painted on their doorposts.

Every year at Passover, lambs were brought to the temple in Jerusalem to be sacrificed, reminding God's people that sin requires blood.

Life must be given for life. The temple was a place of sacrifice and the Passover was a time of sacrifice. And here is Jesus saying, I must be about my father's business.

So what is the father's business? Well, it's the work of salvation through sacrifice. Jesus came to be the Lamb of God.

The true Passover sacrifice whose blood would finally and completely take away the sins of the world. This is the epiphany.

[2 : 31] The child in the temple is the one who will fulfill every sacrifice ever offered. All those previous sacrifices year after year could never fully take away sin.

Hebrews 10, 4 tells us that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. They were indeed sacrifices commanded by God, but they pointed toward the true sacrifice. Christ himself. He offered himself once for all on the cross. His blood was shed and his life was given.

The father's business was accomplished and the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice was made.

When Jesus said in the temple, I must be about my father's business.

He was announcing the mission that would culminate at Calvary. Sacrifice, however, is not only what our Lord came to do. It is what we are called to as well.

[3 : 39] This is where the epistle and the gospel readings this morning meet. Paul says in Romans 12, 1.

Notice the word, therefore.

Because Christ has offered himself for us. This is how we respond. When Christ offered himself on the cross, we are now united to him in baptism.

When he rose from the dead, we rose with him. We were clothed with Christ in baptism and made members of his body. This is all about living out who we already are in him.

Because we are in Christ, we become living sacrifices. Not dead animals on an altar, but our living bodies, our whole lives offered to God as worship.

[4 : 51] What we do with our time, our speech, our habits, our work, and our relationships. All of it is now gathered up into our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

Because we belong to Christ. This is the life that flows from union with him. But we need help with this.

Which is why Paul tells us in Romans 12, 2. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The world constantly tries to shape us in ways that do not lead to God.

So we need our minds renewed, transformed, and reshaped by God's truth. So that we can live as the living sacrifices we are.

As Anglicans, this is where the prayer book serves us. The daily office, the lectionary, the collects, the psalter.

[6 : 01] These are not just traditions. They are tools God has given us to help us live out who we already are in Christ. When we pray the daily office, we are being formed by scripture and prayer to live as those who belong to Christ.

The prayer book helps us embody the sacrificial life of Christ through its daily rhythms of prayer and consistent participation in the Eucharist.

Because in baptism, his life becomes ours. This is the epiphany we celebrate today. Jesus revealed who he is in the temple at Passover.

The one who came to fulfill the Father's business of sacrifice. United to him in baptism, we now live out his sacrificial life in the world.

So let us take up the ordinary means our Lord has given us. The scriptures, the sacraments, and our common prayer tradition.

[7 : 10] And by the mercies and grace of God, may our lives become what they already are in him. Living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.