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Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD
January 7-8, 2012

Two weeks ago, we gathered to celebrate the birth of our Savior. And in these weeks of our Christmas season, we have heard in our scriptures again and again a reaffirmation of who it is that we celebrate; that this infant born to us, this time given to us is the son of God, the Messiah, the Christ.

We heard the angels proclaim it from the heavens, singing God's glory for such a wonderful gift to God's people. We heard the shepherds come to see for themselves was it true what they had heard and left rejoicing in God's love shown through the gift of this child. And that this week we hear of the magi coming from foreign lands, traveling a distance to come and pay homage to this newborn king of Israel.

On this feast of Epiphany, we are reminded yet again that what we celebrate at this time of year – and every day of the year – is the wonderful gift of God's love, manifest to us through Jesus Christ. That Jesus is truly the son of God, the Christ, the one sent to redeem the world. We are reminded that in Christ's coming, it's not just a messiah for the chosen people, for a select group, but that Jesus comes to save the whole world, to offer redemption to all people that all might come to know God's great love and the goodness shown us through Jesus Christ.

When we look at the stories of the Epiphany, a couple of things stand out. We first notice King Herod, his response to this good news that there is a new king of Israel born. It says that he is troubled by this news. And it says then that all of Jerusalem is troubled by this news, because Herod is troubled by this news. He sees this news as a threat, a threat to his reign, a threat to him personally. And his pride in who he is as king prevents him from being open to this good news, this good news of God's love made manifest in this child given to us. That even those who surround Herod, even in their own way, seeking only what they think is right, dispelling what they think is wrong, not really leading to any kind of real revolution that's opening themselves to this good news of this gift of God's son. It is Herod in his hard-heartedness that he fails to see the magical statement of God in his presence.

We turn to the magi. We hear that the magi come from a faraway land. They're looking for this newborn king. They're expecting a palace where this king resides. And upon finding finally the place where the child rests they enter a humble residence. Jesus lying in a manger, with his mother Mary there tending to his needs. And we are told that in the presence of this gift, they humbled themselves and lie prostrate, giving homage to this newborn. They recognize in their presence their openness, their eagerness to experience this good news of God's love.

As we come here on this Feast of Epiphany, we see in the magi an example of how we are to be as a people of faith. I think the whole sense of original sin is that oftentimes we who are the created like to think that we have become gods of our own making. We don't see ourselves as the created in God's image, and so we like to make sure that things are to our liking, to our comfort, to what we think is right. And yet what we are called to is that sense of humbleness, of opening ourselves to what it is that our God offers us. And our God offers us the most wonderful gift – the gift of his son - who shows us just how much our God loves us. It is in the humbleness of this child born that we come to learn our dignity and God's peace as God's children. That it is through this child that that remnant of original sin is finally washed away; that we are restored to who we are as God's people in faith.

And so we come here to celebrate this Epiphany, this manifestation of God made present to us through a gift – the gift of the savior – Jesus, the son of God, the one who comes to redeem us, to show us how much our God loves us.