

# Pastors Network

Church of the  
Lutheran  
Brethren

## **Epiphany** (Series C)

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Gospel:** Matthew 2:1-12

**Epistle:** Ephesians 3:1-12

**Lesson:** Isaiah 60:1-6

**Psalm:** Psalm 72:1-11 (12-18)

### **CLB Commentary – Rev. David Rinden**

(See also the following texts: Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-12 and Psalm 72)

The Matthew Christmas Story, it seems to me, often takes second place to Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. Perhaps this happens because Luke's account is longer; or takes place first in Incarnation of our Lord. Although Matthew writes his gospel primarily to Jewish readers, the main incarnation event in his Gospel shows that Gentiles have been included and the Good News of the Gospel is also for them.

Historically, the feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6, to commemorate (in the West) the coming of the Magi (or Wise Men) to Jesus. In the East the feast of Epiphany commemorates the baptism of Jesus.

Most people in the United States, and I suppose Canada too, have come to celebrate Christmas all during the month of December coinciding with the excessive commercial period between the U.S. Thanksgiving and Christmas. Changing these customs is difficult. I still like to think of the season of Advent as a time of waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ. Christmas begins with a celebration of Christ's birth on the eve of Christmas and continues for the twelve days after Christmas Day; ending with Epiphany, the 12<sup>th</sup> day. Following the church year allows us to focus upon the Incarnation of our Lord, not just on one day, but over a period of time beginning with his birth in Bethlehem and ending with the coming of the Gentiles from the East.

The Old Testament lesson for Epiphany points us toward the great light that has come: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn..."

The epistle reading informs us about the great mystery of Christ, "which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shearers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."

The Matthew account vividly shows us the rising of this light so that the nations will see it and come to worship Jesus as Lord. The Magi follow the star until it comes to Jesus and with joy worship Him. This text unmistakably shows us that the Good News of Christ is for the world. This truth, although promised to Abraham, came to fruition when Christ was born.

A common view at the time of Jesus' birth was that each nation or tribe had its own god. This text shows that there is one God for the whole world and He has come to us in the person of Jesus.

This text may tempt the preacher to spend too much time answering questions about the text: Which Herod? Who were the Magi and from where did they come? How many Magi came to worship Jesus? How did they learn of the coming of Christ? These questions may never be answered. However, there is one question that can be answered: Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? While not in the text, these questions can also be answered: Who is He that came? Why did He come? For whom did He come?

Although the ILCW pericope series is on a three-year cycle, this text is used in each of the cycles as the text for Epiphany. May you once again find joy in proclaiming the good news of this text.