

# Swaythling Parish

## Sunday 3 January 2021

### Epiphany

#### Welcome

We don't have a full service sheet for Sunday 3 Jan – as we won't be posting a service sheet that week (as the Parish Office will be shut the previous week). But we are including here the readings, collect and prayers for Sunday 3 January which you may like to reflect on, and there will be services in both churches and online that day. You can find our Sunday morning reflection on the YouTube channel, available at 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

#### Epiphany

This Sunday is Epiphany Sunday. In the Western churches, the Epiphany ('manifestation') became an occasion to celebrate one element in the story of Christ's birth, the visit of the far-travelled magi, understood as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Matthew's account speaks simply of 'wise men from the east'; later tradition fixed their number at three, made them kings and recalled their resonant names – Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. In this perspective, Epiphanytide is an apt season to pray for the worldwide mission of the Church. The feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, appropriately falls in the Epiphany season, as does the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In the Eastern churches, the Epiphany is, rather, the celebration of Christ's baptism at the hands of John, when the heavens were opened and a voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God's beloved Son. The miracle of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus 'first manifested his glory', follows immediately:

Manifest at Jordan's stream,  
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;  
and at Cana wedding-guest  
in thy Godhead manifest.  
(Christopher Wordsworth)

The Sundays of Epiphany draw out these aspects. The season of joyful celebration that begins at Christmas now continues through the successive Sundays of Epiphany, and the festal cycle ends only with the Feast of the Presentation (Candlemas). The child who has been manifested to the magi at his birth is now recognized by Simeon and Anna, when he comes to be presented in the Temple according to the Law of Israel. He is both 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' and 'the glory of God's people Israel'. But the redemption he will bring must be won through suffering; the Incarnation is directed to the Passion; and Simeon's final words move our attention away from the celebration of Christmas and towards the mysteries of Easter.

Church of England – Introduction to Epiphany

#### Readings:

##### Isaiah 60: 1-6

*As the Jewish Exile was ending, Isaiah wrote of the part the Jewish people will play in enabling other nations to worship God.*

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;

they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their  
nurses' arms.  
Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought  
to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.  
A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord

#### Ephesians 3: 1-12

*Paul, writing to Gentiles in Ephesus, assures them that they also share in the riches of Christ.*

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who

created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

### **Matthew 2: 1-12**

*Matthew echoes the words of Isaiah as he describes the visit of the Gentile wise men to Jesus.*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; so it has been written by the prophet:

*"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel."*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts

of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### **The Collect**

O God,  
who by the leading of a star  
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:  
mercifully grant that we,  
who know you now by faith,  
may at last behold your glory face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### **Prayers**

Let us worship the Saviour with joy  
and make our prayer to our heavenly Father.  
The magi came from the east to worship your Son:  
Father, grant to Christians everywhere  
the spirit of adoration  
**Lord of glory, hear our prayer.**

The infant Christ received gifts of gold, incense and myrrh:  
Father, accept the offering of our hearts and minds  
at the beginning of this year, 2021  
**Lord of glory, hear our prayer.**

The kingdoms of this world have become  
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ:  
Father, grant an abundance of peace to your world  
**Lord of glory, hear our prayer.**

The Holy Family lived in exile and in the shadow of death:

Father, look in mercy on all who are poor and powerless, and all who suffer  
**Lord of glory, hear our prayer.**

Your Son shared the life of his home and family at Nazareth:  
Father, protect in your love our neighbours,  
our families and this community of which we are a part  
**Lord of glory, hear our prayer.**

Father, we rejoice in our fellowship  
with the shepherds, the angels, the magi,  
Mary and Joseph  
and all the faithful departed.  
In your unfailing love for us and for all people,  
hear and answer our prayers through your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **Closing Blessing**

May God the Father,  
who led the wise men by the shining of a star  
to find the Christ, the Light from light,  
lead you in your pilgrimage to find the Lord.  
May God, who has delivered us from the dominion  
of darkness,  
give us a place with the saints in light  
in the kingdom of his beloved Son.  
May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
shine in your hearts and fill our lives  
with his joy and peace.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

*Thank you for joining in with us. If we can support you in any way, please get in touch. peter.dockree@outlook.com 023 8055 4231 Scripture quotations from NRSVA version of the Bible, © 1989, 1995.*