

January 6, 2019

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Good morning,

Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means “to make manifest.” and since the 4th century it has been a major celebration for the church. It’s the season when we recognize the divine mission of Jesus, revealed in the magi’s visit. And with our Ephesians texts we remember the call to participate in this manifestation. It is a celebration of revelation and mystery. To begin today’s message, and as a response to the scripture that has just been shared I will read a poem.

****separate paper at the back****

This is the season of growing light, both in the length of the days and in the realization of our part in the story. Our walk into the new year is accompanied by the journey written about in our gospel text for this morning. In Matthew we witness the magi, translated here ‘wise men,’ but often used as a blanket term for many roles including that of astrologers and dream-interpreters. They follow the star to pay homage to the birth of royalty, and lay gifts down for Jesus. Obviously this has symbolic significance as a marker of Jesus’ Divine Kingship - some significant foreshadowing is happening here, but we are going to stick with the magi’s journey a little longer.

Often the bible shows us characters who give up everything, to follow God’s way, they abandon their former life for a completely new calling. That is not the story of the Magi, or at least not the part we are told about in Matthew. These people are depicted as living out their job descriptions, taking actions that would have been common practice for them, they are astronomers who read the stars, and dream-interpreters who heed the warnings of dreams. I think there is something absolutely radical in this. These everyday skills and gifting becoming significant enough to record in our gospel, when they are illuminated by the light of Christ. What if we are already good enough, and smart enough, and skilled enough, to bring ourselves

into the story of the manifestation of life, into participation with Epiphany. What if we consider for a moment that God created us, and that maybe that is qualification enough for us to begin, and to continue on.

In Ephesians we hear Paul's admission in verse 8 **“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.”** Now I know this reads like a humble brag, but here ‘Saints’ is being used to refer to the entire community of believers. So Paul is the very least of all the believers, and yet he has been given a gift. Enough to start with and enough to go on. Paul - and the church - are not only benefactors of God's grace, but they are active participants in the realization of the divine hope for this world. The characters in our scriptures this morning all come with their own gifting's, and are invited to use them.

Jean M. Blomrich talks about the innate desire that has been planted in us, that constantly works to draw us closer to God's light. But she clarifies this saying

“At the same time, [it] draws us more deeply into the ‘at home-ness’, or imminence of God. Instead of moving toward God, we rest in God. We recognize what we have, are, and do enough. It is a gift.”

We begin epiphany with the acknowledgement of the Light that already is, the leading star in the sky, the gift of grace received, the baby of divine salvation already born. We hear of the coming future, bright and yet still incomprehensible. The Manifestation of Jesus's light here on earth is an ever-widening articulation, expressed through our daily, mundane, beautiful lives. The life of you, and of me, of Paul and of the Magi. Of God's gathering together of the the multi-varied giftings of all things in creation. Epiphany is the season when we celebrate the different ways in which God comes to be seen, and so today we will take some time now to honour the lights present here at Nutana.

I invite you now to reflect on the light you witness in those around you, in the lived expression of this community, and the light that is present within yourself. As you reflect, those who wish can come forward to light a candle as a way of sharing these moments of light. If you prefer to remain seated but would appreciate having a candle lit for you then raise your hand and I would be honoured to light one on your behalf.

Before we begin I will offer a blessing by John O'Donohue as you contemplate the place of manifesting light in your life.

Blessings "A Come Home to Yourself" & "Celebration" by John O'Donohue

May all that is unforgiven in you

Be released.

May your fears yield

Their deepest tranquilities.

May all that is unlived in you

Blossom into a future

Graced with love.

~

Now is the time to free the heart,

Let all intentions and worries stop,

Free the joy inside the self,

Awaken to the wonder of your life.

Open your eyes and see the friends

Whose hearts recognize your face as kin,

Those whose kindness watchful and near,

Encourages you to live everything here.

Amen.

