

The Epiphany of the Lord

January 4, 2026

Your bright light has come.

The stewardship of God's grace.

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

-rvb.

“The Work of Christmas” — Howard Thurman

Joy is an act of resistance.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.*

Moments of Light

*In shadows deep where silence lies, Awake, alert, let wonder rise. Each fleeting breath, a spark divine, in every heartbeat; truths align. A whisper found in rustling leaves, in laughter shared; the heart believes. **Epiphanies** in everyday grace, Unlock the worlds we often chase. So, linger close and take your time, for in this life, each moment's rhyme Carries the weight of wisdom's call, An endless gift inside us all. -Internet.*

Threads of Fate

In quiet moments, fate reveals, Threads intertwine, a dance divine, Connections form with whispered seals, A tapestry of hearts align. Threads intertwine, a dance divine, in shadows cast; the light does break, A tapestry of hearts align, in every choice, the paths we take. In shadows cast, the light does break, Epiphanies that softly chime, in every choice, the paths we take, we find the ties that bind through time. Epiphanies that softly chime, A tapestry of hearts align, we find the ties that bind through time, in quiet moments, fate reveals. -Internet.

Whispers of the Heart

In the quiet chambers of the heart's domain, where shadows linger, and echoes wane, Secrets lie buried, like treasures in clay, Awaiting the dawn of epiphany's ray. Silent confessions dwell in the night, veiled in the whispers of soft, tender light; each beat a story, entwined with despair, yet radiant hope breathes in moments so rare. The heart, a guardian of love's sacred lore, holds memories cherished, yet yearning for more, Unraveling layers with each gentle sigh, like petals unfolding beneath the vast sky. In dreams, it recalls laughter and tears, The fervent embraces, and lingering fears, but secrets long buried, like spirits restrained, yearn for the sunrise where freedom is gained. Through corridors of past, where shadows conspire, A flicker of truth ignites a new fire, an epiphany blossoms, revealing profound, The heart whispers softly, its wisdom unbound. As dawn's light breaks forth, and darkness takes flight, The heart sings its secrets in sweet morning light, For in every whisper, a story reborn, Of love, pain, and joy—the heart's sacred dawn. -Internet.

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” Acts 17:28. -rvb.

Roger J. Vanden Busch.

On Monday I sent out a reflection on the scriptures for Mary, the Mother of God; and in addition, adding multiple facets/stages of the life of Mary. As a result, I received the following question/feedback from a friend, Don who posed a question relative to where Mary lived and with whom after the

death of her son. The following is my response to Don with a further elaboration as to what happened to her ---

Hi Don, good question - "How about Mary living her later life in Ephesus with the apostle John?"

iron sharpens iron - which promoted me to do further research on this question - thus, I have added the following:

Mary's Disappearance from history

Initial response: The belief of most biblical scholars is that Mary lived out her life in the company of the disciples. The truth is the rest of her life is shrouded in legend.

Addition:

"Mary living her later life in Ephesus with the apostle John? This topic is of much debate and tradition. The Gospels do not provide direct evidence of Mary's life after the death of Jesus; the tradition holds that she lived with St. John the Apostle, whom Jesus had instructed to care for his mother. This narrative is supported by the accounts of Irenaeus of Lyons and Polycrates of Ephesus, who describe St. John moving to Ephesus after his time on the island of Patmos. The house of Mary, located on Mt. Koressos near Ephesus, is believed to be the place where Mary lived for the remainder of her earthly life. The site has been recognized as a place of pilgrimage since 1896 and has been visited by several popes, including Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. The shrine has been a significant site for both Christians and Muslims, with pilgrims visiting the site to seek intercessions and blessings." Internet.

Thanks for the question - one good question is worth a thousand answers.
Regards, Roger

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Reading I

[Isaiah 60:1-6](#)

**Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.**

See, darkness covers the earth,
and thick clouds cover the peoples;
but upon you the LORD shines,
and over you appears his glory.
Nations shall walk by your light,
and kings by your shining radiance.
Raise your eyes and look about;
they all gather and come to you:
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow,
for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.
Caravans of camels shall fill you,
dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;
all from Sheba shall come
bearing gold and frankincense,
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from Third Isaiah (56-66) for continuity of thought and theme, add to chapter 60 the last two verses of the previous one. The long-looked-for “light” (59:9) is about to dawn (60:1). It must have been a light of inspiration and a beacon of hope for the spiritless community of Jerusalem around 500 BC. Verse 1 clearly speaks of the good news of salvation, while verse 2 considers the darkness which the people of Jerusalem were experiencing. Nevertheless, in the throes of darkness dwells the presence of God. His light will snuff out the darkness, and every nation shall see it and be attracted to it (verses 3-4). The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” – John 1:4-5. The scripture scholar, William Barclay writes, “To describe Jesus in terms of light is to speak in a religious language which is universal. It may well be true to say that light was the first experience that primitive people ever worshipped, for in the most primitive of religions the sun is often the first of all the gods. For all of us, light is something to love and the darkness is something to fear.”

Where will the displaced go? They will come to Jerusalem from the North (Midian and Ephah) and the South (Sheba). They will bear gifts of gold and frankincense, symbolic of a king and a deity. They will be the do-gooders. The Gentiles are migrating to Zion (verses 2-4). They place

their possessions at the disposal of the revived Jewish state (verses 3-5). Those of Israel, scattered among the nations, are to gather home by land and sea (verses 8-9). This newly formed nation of Israel offers a partial fulfillment of this prophecy of restoration, renewal, and universality. The fullness of glory will be Zion's when she functions as the spiritual center of the world (verses 10-21).

In summary, Isaiah foresees all nations joining in a spiritual pilgrimage to the light. God is a light shining in the darkness for all to see. The Gentiles respond to this revelation of God as symbolized by the Magi who represent the universality of God's glory for all the people of all nations. Writer, Madeleine L'Engle in her book **The Irrational Season** writes, “Unclench your fists, Hold out your hands. Take mine. Let us hold each other. Thus is his Glory, Manifest!” p. 39. Epiphany is a manifestation, a showing forth of Jesus' presence in the world. We are called to celebrate the “spirit” of Epiphany. It is not the gift, but the “spirit” whose worth and substance are priceless.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13.

R. (cf. 11) **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;

He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.
R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.
All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.
R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.
R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Reading II

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Brothers and sisters:

You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace
that was given to me for your benefit,
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from Ephesians, Paul writes from prison, highlighting his unique role, calling, and vocation as an apostle, disciple, and steward of God's grace to the Gentiles. Following on the heels of this assertion, God's promise is offered to everyone who will receive it, namely, we are co-heirs and members of the same body. As a disciple of God's grace, Paul is privy to the mysteries of God's ways and now bears the gifts of the "good news" as was made known to the apostles and prophets. The Gentiles are "fellow heirs" of God's covenant for they are of the same body, the same spirit, and they are no different than their neighbors, the Jews. As one in the Spirit, they can make positive changes in the world instead of focusing on the differences that separate them—in terms of contemporary times and problematic issues –THINK– DEI (Latin for Of God) - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Recently, the White House issued a series of executive orders aimed at ending diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in both the federal government and the private sector. Nevertheless, dozens of major businesses have rolled back DEI programs to avoid being vulnerable to lawsuits from the federal government. Several of the companies, such as Target, Amazon, and Walmart have faced boycotts from customers

protesting the changes. DEI policies have been around since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, color, or national origin.

The spirit of Isaiah is reflected in the words of Paul to the Ephesians and to us today. God's plan is not something mysterious, but truth hidden until the appropriate and appointed time of revealing it. The secret plan is not that the Gentiles should be saved, but along with the saved Jews, they should form part of the body of Christ. Gentiles are now co-heirs of God, co-members of the body, co-sharers of the promise of the Holy Spirit, made Imago DEI (of God) and DEI=Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Alleluia

Matthew 2:2

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Gospel

Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
in the days of King Herod,
behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,
"Where is the newborn king of the Jews?
We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage."
When King Herod heard this,

he was greatly troubled,
and all Jerusalem with him.
Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,
He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea,
for thus it has been written through the prophet:
And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel."
Then Herod called the magi secretly
and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.
He sent them to Bethlehem and said,
"Go and search diligently for the child.
When you have found him, bring me word,
that I too may go and do him homage."
After their audience with the king they set out.
And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.
They were overjoyed at seeing the star,
and on entering the house
they saw the child with Mary his mother.
They prostrated themselves and did him homage.
Then they opened their treasures
and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they departed for their country by another way.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

Matthew is writing for a Jewish audience drawing upon the richness of the Old Testament stories and demonstrates how Jesus is God's "Epiphany" or self-revelation to all nations. Thus, the astrologers of the East symbolize the universality of Jesus for all nations, Jew, and Gentiles. While three gifts were offered to the "king," Jesus gives the gift of himself to the universe. The Magi ask, "Where is the king of the Jews?" Jesus is

referred to as “king” and he is the King Eternal, Christ the King, and the light that outshines all other kings’ past and present.

The Magi are like the shepherds in the Gospel of Luke. They are directed to the child. They recognize him, honor him, offer him gifts and then leave. The Magi follow the star and discover the child. The Gentile world, unlike the Jewish world, discover Jesus by natural signs and events, namely, the star (Numbers 22-24). Upon seeing the child, the Magi, like the shepherds are filled with joy as opposed to Herod and company who reject him. The gifts of the Magi, like those of Isaiah are gold and frankincense, symbols of a king and a deity. A third gift is added, that of myrrh which is used for burial purposes possibly referring to Jesus’ death/resurrection.

Epiphany is a manifestation, a showing forth of Jesus’ gift of presence in the world. We are challenged to celebrate the “spirit” of Epiphany. It is not the gift, but the “spirit” whose worth is priceless. In the words of theologian, John Shea, “The Little Drummer Boy is poor. He has nothing of value to give the Christ child. So, he plays his drum and the ‘objectively worthless’ ‘boom, boom, boom,’ becomes subjectively priceless. In ‘Charlie Brown’s Christmas Story’ Charlie goes in search of a magnificent

tree for his Christmas party. What he eventually finds is a broken-down tree with one sagging ornament. Yet it is this tree that brings the kids together and opens for them the spirit of Christmas. When the gift has no value in the ‘eyes of the world,’ it may become priceless to the ‘eyes of faith,’ eyes sensitive to the spiritual gathering of people.”

Final prayer: God, the arrival of the Magi proclaims to the universe your son, Jesus, has come to save all people of every land, nation, and time. Like the star in the sky, we are to light the way for others. Amen.

Blessings to you and your loved ones, Roger J. Vanden Busch