

† HOME SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER †
Epiphany Observed
January 3, 2021

PRELUDE

Brightest and Best

John Rasley

INVOCATION and CONFESSION

P In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth.

P If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.

P Since we are gathered to hear God's Word and call upon Him in prayer and praise, let us first confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

P Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for us, and for His sake forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

INTROIT (*from Psalm 72*)

P Endow the King with Your justice, O God, the royal Son with Your righteousness.

C He will judge Your people in righteousness, Your afflicted ones with justice.

P The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to Him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present Him gifts.

C All kings will bow down to Him and all nations will serve Him.

P For He will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

C He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.

P May His name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun.

C All nations will be blessed through Him, and they will call Him blessed.

OPENING HYMN

The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

P Let us pray:

C O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the nations. Lead us who know You by faith to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Isaiah 60:1-6

¹Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. ²For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. ³Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ⁴Lift 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. ⁵Then 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. ⁶A 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.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE

Ephesians 3:1-12

¹This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – ²for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, ³and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵In 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: ⁶that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸Although 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, ⁹and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰so 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. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

ALLELUIA VERSE

P Alleluia. These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

C We have observed His star at its rising, and have come to worship Him. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 2nd chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "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." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea..." ⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then 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." ⁹When 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. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On 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. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

HYMN OF THE DAY

What Child is This

What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring Him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born the babe, the son of Mary!

SERMON

"Reflections on the Reading: Matthew 2:1-12" (insert)
Rev. Dr. Robert Hartwell

THE APOSTLES' CREED

C I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P Joining our voices with the songs of the faithful, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

P Glorious God, fill Your church with joy. Give wisdom and courage to Your people that we may speak of our faith with boldness and confidence. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P Place wonder into the hearts of those who search the skies and explore the heavens. Let this season of growing light remind us of all the ways You renew the created world. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P Bring all nations and rulers to the splendor of Your dawn. Raise up advocates for the vulnerable and inspire leaders to be generous with abundance, that all people might live in stability and freedom. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P Come with Your healing power to all who seek love, support, and restoration. Dispel fears and shadows. Restore broken relationships and mend broken hearts. Bring relief to those who are sick or struggling. We pray especially for all on our prayer line and those we remember before You now...(PAUSE). Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P Send traveling mercies upon all who journey towards home. Guard refugees and immigrants, and protect families fleeing conflict in their homelands. Tend to those who have no place to lay their heads. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P According to the boundless riches of Christ, You draw all Your saints to Your heavenly places. Comfort those who are missing loved ones, and make all things new again in the splendor of Your glory. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P God of mercy, we lift these and all our prayers to You in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord, who taught us to pray:

C Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

As with Gladness Men of Old

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led by Thee.

As they offered gifts most rare at Thy cradle, rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to Thee, our heav'nly King.

In the heav'nly country bright need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down;
there forever may we sing Alleluia's to our King.

CLOSING PRAYER

P Everlasting God, the radiance of Your gracious presence comes to all who seek You. Fill the world with Your glory, and show Yourself to all the faithful through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, who is the True Light and the bright Morning Star; for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

BENEDICTION

P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

C Amen.

P Go in peace to serve the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

Karl Osterland

* * * * *

Special thanks to our additional participants in today's service:

Lector Larry Cosentino

Children's Message Nora Podoll

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Reflections on the Reading by Rev. Dr. Robert Hartwell

January 3, 2021 (Epiphany Observed)

Reflections on the Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "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." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea..."

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then 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." ⁹When 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.

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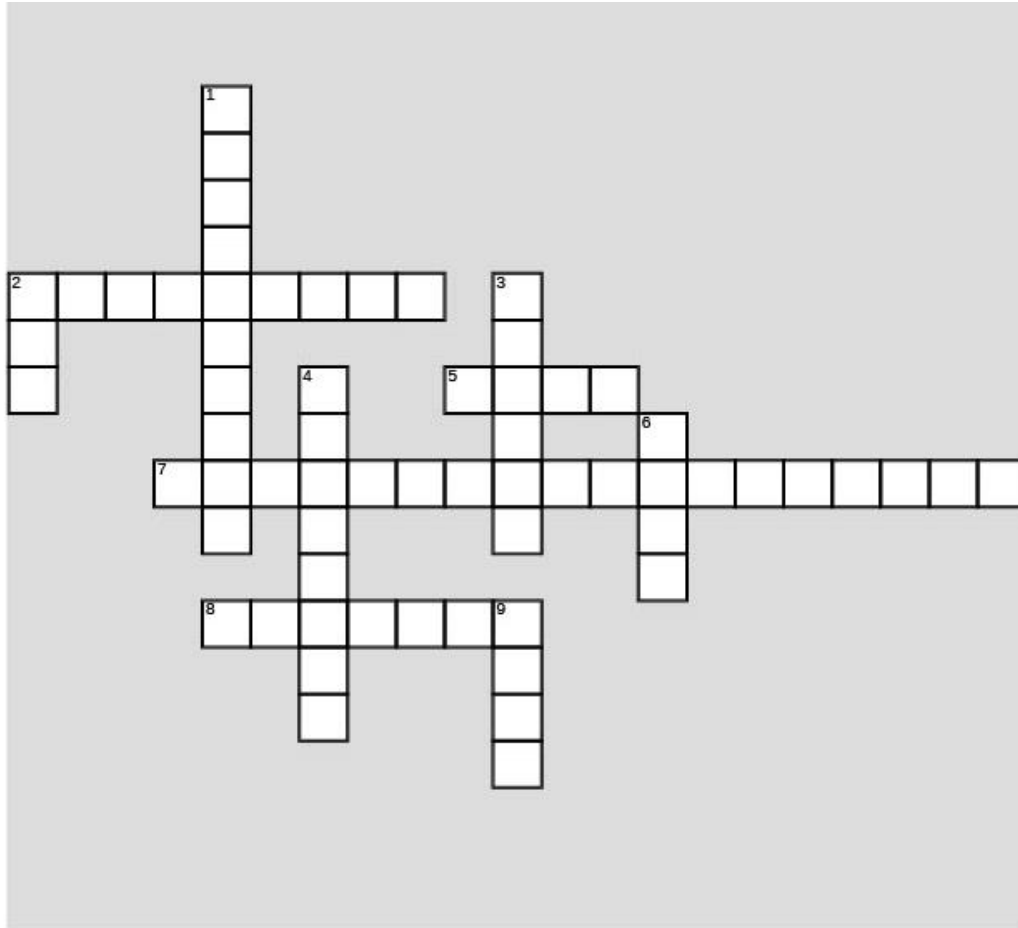
Reflections:

1. This is a story of political intrigue. This is in the time of King Herod.
2. St. Matthew records the truth that what leaders say and how they act does not always match.
3. The readings remind us that God is a faithful leader and He will reveal Himself and lead us to His will.
4. Isaiah tells us that this can happen to a nation or people.
5. St. Paul reminds us that this happened to him, and he was an unlikely follower as he was an enemy of Christ.
6. Wise men and women still follow God to Christ.

Reflections
on
the
Reading

Personal Notes:

Reflections Crossword Puzzle:



Across

- 2 Place where God is leading us.
- 5 Apostle who changed from a persecutor of Christians to a faithful Christian leader.
- 7 Matthew Chapter 2 is a story of...
- 8 Matthew reminds us these peoples' actions may not match their words.

Down

- 1 The King of Israel when Jesus was born.
- 2 Is a faithful leader.
- 3 Prophet of God who spoke to God's people and tried to lead them as a nation.
- 4 Festival we are observing today.
- 6 These kind of men and women follow God.
- 9 This lead the Wise men to Jesus.

WORD LIST:

EPIPHANY
GOD
GODS_WILL

ISAIAH
KING_HEROD
LEADERS

PAUL
POLITICAL_INTRIGUE
STAR

WISE