

In Epiphany we rejoice over God's gift of His Son Jesus Christ, manifest in the flesh, and revealed to us in the Scriptures. "He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" [Romans 8:30]

#### THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

In Epiphany we constantly hear of light: the star that lead the Magi to Jesus [St. Matthew 2:2], the light that shines in the darkness [St. John 1:5], and the light that shines from Jesus' face [St. Matthew 17:2]. Light dispelling the darkness has been a Biblical theme since creation, when God created light on the first day [Genesis 1:2]. In Christ the "Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." [St. Luke 1:78-79].

In Epiphany we celebrate God's gift of light in Jesus Christ, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," [2 Corinthians 4:6]. We rejoice in the light of Christ, looking forward to heaven where "there shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever," [Revelation 22:5].

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**"Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning"**  
by Reginald Heber, 1783-1826  
Hymn #128 The Lutheran Hymnal Text: Matt. 2:11  
EPIPHANY

1. Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;  
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.
2. Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining;  
Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall.  
Angels adore Him in slumber reclining,  
Maker and Monarch and Savior of all.
3. Shall we not yield Him, In costly devotion  
Odors of Edom and offerings divine,  
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,  
Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine?
4. Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure.  
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;  
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.
5. Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;  
Star of the East, the horizon adorning,  
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

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**The light shines in darkness; and  
the darkness comprehended it not.**  
**St. John 1:5**

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**We beheld His glory, the glory of the only  
begotten of the Father, full of grace and  
truth.**

**St. John 1.14**

#### Collect for Epiphany

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we, who know Thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of Thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen

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If Christmas is the celebration of the Father's gift of the Son to the world, Epiphany is the unwrapping of that gift. Jesus' glory is manifested in many ways: His unique birth in the womb of the virgin, His teachings and miracles, His death, and finally His resurrection. Epiphany highlights many of the events in Jesus' ministry that highlight His divinity and point toward His ultimate goal, the cross. Three of these are: 1) the visit of the Magi from the East, 2) Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River, and 3) the Transfiguration.



#### GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

We celebrate the visitation of the magi on the Day of Epiphany as the beginning of Jesus' manifestation to the Gentile world [*St. Matthew 2:1-12*]. God had promised to Abraham that his seed, the Messiah, would bless all nations [*Genesis 12:3*], and Isaiah had seen all the nations stream into Jerusalem [*Isaiah 2:3*]. The visit of the magi is the beginning of the prophetic vision of a universal church, a church of people from, "every tribes and tongue and people and nation," [*Revelation 5:9*].

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**And the Gentiles shall come to  
Thy light, and kings to the  
brightness of Thy rising.**

**Isaiah 60:3**

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The magi bring three gifts that correspond to the three offices of Christ, gold for the king, frankincense for the priest, and myrrh (which is a spice used in burial) for the prophet who would

be murdered for speaking God's word to His wayward people.

In Epiphany we remember who our Lord is, the God-man who came to be our prophet, priest and king forever.



#### THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Jesus is once again manifest to us when He comes to the Jordan to be baptized by John [*St. Matthew 3:13-17*; *St. Mark 1:9-11*; *St. Luke 3:21-22*; *St. John 1:29-34*]. Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus' baptism is one of the clearest pictures of the Trinity in the entire Scriptures. Jesus, the Son, is standing in the Jordan River; the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove; God, the Father, speaks from heaven, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased," [*St. Matthew 4:17*]. God's Son has come to be baptized so that in our baptism we are called God's sons. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," [*Galatians 3:26-27*].

When we celebrate Jesus' baptism, we see the second person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, manifest to save us. We remember our own baptism and rejoice in the sure hope of its consummation, eternal life with God.



#### THE TRANSFIGURATION

On the last Sunday in Epiphany we remember Jesus' transfiguration on the holy mountain when His "face shone like the sun and clothes became as

white as the light," [*St. Matthew 17:2*]. We see a picture of Jesus as both God and man, the glory of God shining through Jesus' human nature. This is the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, Jesus is fully God and fully man, the *theanthropos* (the God-man). The Son of God has taken upon Himself our human nature in order to save us. "In as much then as the children have partaken in flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil," [*Hebrews 2:14*]. In Epiphany we remember that Jesus is both God and man in order to be our Saviour.

When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain He talked with Moses and Elijah [*St. Matthew 17:3*], and God also spoke with them saying, "this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," [*St. Matthew 17:5*]. Saint Peter says "and we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, as you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place," [*2 Peter 1:18-19*].

Peter reminds us of the importance and vital necessity of the Scriptures, the "prophetic word." We rejoice in the offices of Christ (seen in the visit of the Magi), the Holy Trinity (seen in Jesus' baptism), and the two natures of Christ (seen in Jesus' transfiguration), only because God has revealed this to us in His Holy Scriptures. Truly God's Word is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" [*Psalms 119:105*].