

Sermon January 7, 2007

Today is the first Sunday after Epiphany. It is also the day we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season. On the day of Epiphany we celebrate the visit from the Magi, or Wise men or Kings or whatever you want to call them. We actually don't know how many there were. We do know that there were more than 1 and they brought 3 kinds of gifts. Do you remember what they were? Gold, frankincense and myrrh, gifts fit for a king. So we traditionally say there were three. And we stick with 3 because "We 7 kings from orient are" doesn't sound right.

The magi didn't come until about 2 years after Jesus was born. Just think if Epiphany marks the end of the Christmas season and the Wise men didn't come for 2 years, they celebrated Christmas for a long time.

An Epiphany is an eye opening experience, an enlightening experience. It is a time when you experience the presence of God, a "God moment". The magi were led by a star or a bright light, no doubt provided by God to show these strangers of the faith where the son of God would be born.

But as you know we are in the year of Luke. This year the bible reading we read for the most part are readings from the gospel according to Luke. Last year it was Mark's turn this year it's Luke's turn to tell the story of Jesus. So technically I should even be talking about the Wise men because Luke doesn't mention them.

However Luke has Epiphany stories for us. Eye opening revelations for us. Today we start with the Baptism of Jesus.

It is the changing of the guard. John the Baptist prepared the way for the messiah and here he is Jesus. John was in the wilderness baptizing people when he also baptized Jesus. Jesus was baptized and praying when it happens, an epiphany, an eye opening experience, a revelation, a God moment. But I wonder who was it is for?

1

Jesus was baptized and praying when the heavens open up. The Holy Spirit descends on

Jesus in bodily form, like a dove. And a voice from heaven says, "You are my son, the beloved with you I am well pleased."

I want to make one thing crystal clear because it is a pet peeve of mine. Luke says 'The holy Spirit descended in bodily form, like a dove.' It's like a dove. It's not a dove. There was no dove. Luke was describing how the Holy Spirit descended. It wasn't a dove, it was like a dove. Jesus was baptized and praying when the heavens open up the Spirit descends, the voice speaks to Jesus. But do you think the message was just for Jesus?

God tells Jesus, you are my son, the beloved, of you I am well pleased. God tells Jesus before Jesus does anything, you are my son the beloved. With you I am well pleased.

Jesus hasn't started his ministry yet. He has done nothing except maybe a little studying in the temple – which by the way he got in trouble for. Before he does anything – He is God's son, the beloved, God is well pleased with him.

We have a new member of our family. I am a great Uncle. I have always been a great uncle if you ask me. Well this new member of our family is Kelsy. Now let me tell you we are crazy about her. Most of us in the family haven't even seen her except for a photo yet we love her. Her father's cousins heard about the birth and got to the hospital even before the Grandmas got there. She has done nothing yet, yet she is loved. Same as Jesus.

Why do we read about Jesus' epiphany? Was it just for Jesus' sake? I don't think so.

This week in Confirmation the students taught the class about the Apostles' creed, Holy Communion and Baptism as a review. Speaking of babies in one skit we actually witnessed a birth.

Poor kid the doctor couldn't catch him even with a baseball glove when he popped out.

The baby was baptized. During the Baptism he was told that through the waters of baptism he was made a child of God.

2

One of the best reasons to be a Lutheran is the way we look at baptism. In baptism especially infant baptism God tells us "you are my child, my beloved with you I am well pleased. I say

especially in infant baptism because the baby hasn't done anything yet. Yet God loves them. God was also there before the Grandmas got there, even before the cousins. God takes the opportunity of baptism to claim us as his own. To tell us 'You are my child, my beloved child, with you I am well pleased.'

But that's not the end of it. That's only the beginning. After Jesus was baptized he had some trials in his life & faith. After Jesus was baptized he began his ministry. God had shown great confidence in Jesus, before Jesus had done anything. Now it was time to live up to that confidence.

God has great confidence in you, he told you so when you were baptized, now is the time to live up to that confidence.

Maybe you know someone who has forgotten they are beloved. Maybe they never knew. Or maybe they have not done such a good job living up to God's confidence. Maybe that person is you.

Now is the time to remember your baptism. Now is the time to remember God's love for you.

Now is the time to remember that you are God's beloved.

Now is the time to live in that confidence.

Jesus' epiphany wasn't just for him. It was for you too. But it wasn't just for you either. It's also for who?

God bless you this week.