

## **Worship Service for January 2<sup>nd</sup>: Epiphany Sunday**

- **Old Testament:** Isaiah 60:1–6
- **New Testament:** Ephesians 3:6–12, 14-21
- **Psalms:** Psalm 147:12–20

### **Announcements:**

- **Wednesday January 5<sup>th</sup>:** Bible Studies in St. George's at 7pm. Acts 5
- **Prayer Meeting:** We will be starting a prayer group in January 2022. Anyone who is interested should contact the minister. We will decide if we can do it on zoom or we meet in person. Date and venue will be decided later.
- All those who are not yet members of the church and who will love to become members should contact the minister.

### **Sermon Title: The Lightbulb Moment!**

Today the body of Christ is celebrating Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany is considered as Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles – meaning we who are not Jews, as represented by the Magi in Matthew 2:1-12.

Epiphany is our time to contemplate the Christmas story and feel the wonder of the Magi as they saw the baby. It is believed that Epiphany was initially based on the Jewish Feast of Light. Epiphany, with its focus on the coming of the magi (traditionally representing various races of humanity) celebrates the universality of the gospel. It celebrates the fact that God came for all people.

Epiphany is defined as an illuminating discovery, realization or disclosure. It is described by some as a “lightbulb moment” – a moment of sudden realization, enlightenment or inspiration.

Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul for the Christians in Ephesus teaching them about the redemption obtained by the blood of Jesus Christ. Chapter one and two speaks of the spirit of gratitude and the spirit of the promises in Christ. We are reminded of the importance of why Jesus' sacrifice is important and what it does for humanity.

Our passage of scripture highlights several epiphany moments that I will bring to our attention. Beginning with Ephesians 3:6, the apostle explains that *“the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in*

*Christ Jesus through the gospel.*” It highlights the fact that not only Jews have access to God; but that because of redemption in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles have become heirs together in salvation.

And that brings us to Ephesians 3:12 which highlights another epiphany moment – because of that redemption that brings Jews and Gentiles together as fellow heirs, we now we have access to God in boldness and confidence; we may approach God with freedom. Hallelujah!

Coming to God in boldness and confidence, though, doesn’t mean living life the way we want, but being obedient to God our Father as heirs to His Kingdom. Meaning when we pray God is going to respond to us according to His will because He knows the end from the beginning. Like one preacher describes it, it’s the same as a parent who wants to drive out with their child in the car. They will make sure that they don’t start the car if that child is not well strapped in their car seat or seatbelt as the case may be.

And because the apostle Paul knew that it would be difficult for us in this broken world to understand our lives in Christ, he made this beautiful prayer. And it brings us to another epiphany moment that is highlighted in the prayer. In Ephesians 3:16-19 he prays, *“<sup>16</sup>I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, <sup>17</sup>and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup>I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”*

Apostle Paul prays that Christ will give us strength in our inner being through the Holy Spirit, that he will make his home in our hearts as we trust in him and that our roots will grow into God’s love and keep us strong. And above all he prays that we will have the power to understand how wide, and long and high and deep is of God’s love and also to experience the love of Christ.

He wrote this prayer as if he knew that there would come a time when God’s children will be experiencing a pandemic which keeps going back and forth and causing people to lose time, money, jobs, family, health and other things.

He knew that because we were living in a broken world, we would face challenges that could cause us to doubt our faith in God and doubt His existence. And it would need the great revelation and inspiration of the love of God in Christ Jesus to get us to continue to trust God.

The word of God is coming to us today, as we begin the year 2022 to lots of uncertainties, to offer us this lightbulb moment of the powerful revelation of the love of God. That hopefully we will be able to understand how deep, and wide and long and high is the love of God for us because when we go through such difficult times, the tendency is for us to doubt God's love for us.

One preacher once asked, "if God had appeared to Joseph and told him that he would become the Prime Minister of Egypt but that in order for him to become one, he would have to be thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, go to prison before finally getting to the position of leadership in Egypt, do we think he would have been as excited as he was to share his dream to his siblings and parents?"

Like the apostle Paul, my prayer is that God will open our eyes and help us to experience that lightbulb moment which will help us to grasp how powerful God's love for us is and that that light will lead us as the star that led the wisemen to the new born King; my prayer is that the light will lead us through the uncertainties of this year with hearts full of trust in God that He knows the end from the beginning and that he who started a good work in our lives will bring it to completion.

And like our Old Testament passage in Isaiah 60:1-2, I call on you this day and this year to arise and shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples even as we are experiencing right now; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God of abundance, you feed the hungry from your hand and visit us in our storms: Hear your people as we pray for the whole world, saying: May we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Give to your church, O God, the power to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, that your power at work within us may accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine. May we know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let our leaders and all in authority bow their knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that they may use their power justly, feed the hungry and share your abundance with all your children.

Receive gifts from our children and from the poor in our community, and from their generosity create a plenitude which will satisfy the true needs of every person.

In every place of hunger, bring food, O God; in every place of poverty, bring abundance; in every place of terror, bring comfort and security.

Come to us in our stormy darkness and comfort us in our fears; with your generous touch, heal those dear to us who are struggling with health issues. Hear our thankfulness for the abundance of your grace.

Receive our humble prayers and encourage us onward in the name of Jesus our Christ who taught us to pray together:

*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

May God strengthen you in your inner beings. May Christ Jesus dwell in your hearts through faith and may the Holy Spirit plant your roots deeply in the abundant richness of God's love. And now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.