

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD January 08, 2023

Scripture Texts for the Feast of the Epiphany

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

¹Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ²For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters

shall be carried on the hip. ⁵Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned 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 bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

1. In verse 2 what does the darkness refer to? What darkness would be overshadowing people at Isaiah's time? What darkness was covering the people at the time of Christ's coming? What darkness is covering people in the world today?
2. How well does this writing from Isaiah agree or align with Matthew's writing about who shall come to the Light in Israel?
3. Why does Isaiah use words like "Arise!" and "Lift up your eyes all around!"?

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:1-12

¹For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles — ²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷Of this gospel I was made a

minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

1. What does Paul mean that he is a prisoner of the Lord Jesus?
2. Paul is speaking about the mystery of how God's plan to save all people through Jesus was not known or understood. This was such a radical change in Paul's life! How has Jesus changed your perspective on life?
3. What does Paul mean by "the unsearchable riches in Christ"?
4. Paul declares, God has created the church for the world, but for what reason?

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." ⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what

time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

1. Who are the wisemen from the east? Maybe do a search on the "School of Daniel in Babylon".
2. How significant is the star in this story? What troubled Herod? Was it just the birth of a king? Was it the star arising in the skies?
3. Who did Herod inquire about where the king was to be born? Why do you suppose that they did not see the star?
4. What does verse 8 seem to imply? Is there another way to understand this verse?
5. What does the warning about not returning to Herod teach us?