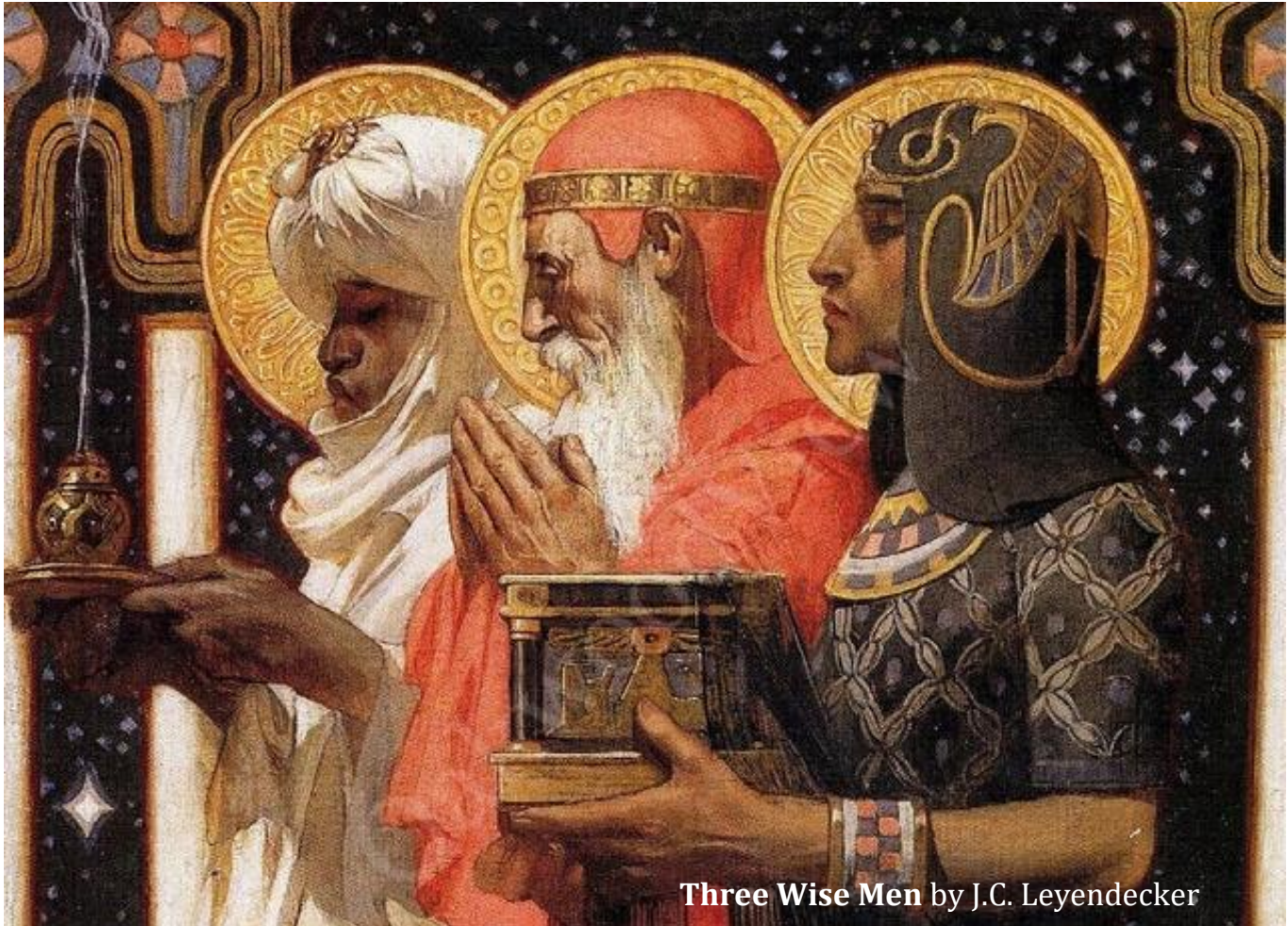


**Friday 6 January 2023**

# The Epiphany



**Three Wise Men by J.C. Leyendecker**

Epiphany is one of the principal feasts of the Church. It is also called ‘The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles’ which emphasises how, from the moment of the Incarnation, the good news of Christ Jesus is for all, both Jew and Gentile, the wise and the simple, male and female—for everyone.

Nothing in the Greek text of the gospels indicates that each of the Magi was male. The idea of their being three in number and being Kings come from later, non-Scriptural traditions.

The Scriptural account in Matthew suggests that Jesus was no longer a new-born baby. The western church adopted ‘the twelve days of Christmas’ that climax on the eve of Epiphany, or ‘Twelfth Night’. The implication by the fifth century was that this was the night on which the Magi arrived.

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops’ Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes this service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [We three kings](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)  
(or a [different version](#))

## The Welcome

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

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

By the mercies of God,

let us confess our sins and present our bodies as a living sacrifice,  
holy and acceptable to him,  
which is our spiritual worship:

**All** Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,  
Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

### **The Collect for Epiphany**

O God,  
who by the leading of a star  
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:  
mercifully grant that we,  
who know you now by faith,  
may at last behold your glory face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

### **First reading**

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Arise, 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; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift 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. Then 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. A 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. *Isaiah 60:1-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**



## Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In 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: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of 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. Although 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, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so 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. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him. *Ephesians 3:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Brightest and best**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, '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.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel".'

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then 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." When 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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. *Matthew 2:1-12*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

In the popular world, Christmas is the biggest event in the Christian calendar. By contrast, the Church of England says the most important is Easter. In fact, it's possible to formulate a series, a spectrum, of importance from Easter at the top through Good Friday, Maundy Thursday, Christmas, through all the minor saint's days, and so on. It can become an interesting exercise, especially deciding why we Christians disagree, asking for example, 'is Good Friday really more important than Christmas, because the atonement could not have occurred without incarnation?'

Disagreements also occur between different denominations. The classic example concerns the Transfiguration which, for most Anglicans, is relatively minor but it's almost impossible to over-emphasise its importance for the Orthodox Church.

It's therefore interesting to note that the early Church considered Epiphany to be the most important event in the entire calendar, eclipsing both Easter and Christmas. And the reason was simple. It concerns the Magi at the heart of today's Gospel reading because they were gentiles.

Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the culmination of a Jewish expectation of salvation. Jesus' parents were Jewish as were all his disciples and close friends. We assume the shepherds in the Christmas story were Jewish, as were the inn keeper, and other tangential characters who appear in the infancy narratives. But God used the Magi to demonstrate that He wanted Jesus to be available to other races.

We sometimes call the Magi in the Christmas story 'wise men' or 'kings'. Almost certainly, they were astrologers, and were following the stars in the sky. They were therefore *invited* into the story, because God made the heavens as well as the earth.

The inclusion of these gentiles changes the direction of the salvation story. The scriptures certainly suggest that other races could be included. For example, the story of Noah includes a promise to the 'whole earth'. But the early Church took the inclusion of the Magi as the first explicit statement that Jesus was not just for the Jewish nation but for everyone. And that's why they considered Epiphany to be the most important of all the Christian festivals for the characters who populate the story prove that God incited non-Jewish outsiders to worship Jesus.

As Christians today, we can learn much from the attitude of the early Church. It's easy to think of the Church belonging to Christians and 'people like us'. The story of the Magi at Epiphany tells us that Jesus came to save everyone regardless of race, background, creed, gender, sexuality, economic power, ... , he came for all of us. As soon as we keep Jesus to ourselves, we fall into the same error as the Jewish people at the time of Jesus who considered the Messiah to be theirs alone. But as soon as we look at the Magi, we remember otherwise. He is for everyone.

Today marks the point in the Christian calendar when the Christmas story changes into the Epiphany story. Like a pebble thrown into a pond, the ripples become wider and travel further: the focus changes from the Incarnation with its baby whom we worship to those outside his immediate family, further away both in terms of blood and geography. If we wish to celebrate Epiphany properly, we will therefore want to involve and embrace an ever-widening circle of people with the love of the Gospel.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

Let us worship the Saviour with joy  
and make our prayer to our heavenly Father.

The magi came from the east to worship your Son:  
Father, grant to Christians everywhere the spirit of adoration ...  
Lord of glory,

**All hear our prayer.**

The infant Christ received gifts of gold, incense and myrrh:  
Father, accept the offering of our hearts and minds ...  
Lord of glory,

**All hear our prayer.**

The kingdoms of this world have become  
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ:  
Father, grant an abundance of peace to your world ...  
Lord of glory,

**All hear our prayer.**

The Holy Family lived in exile and in the shadow of death:  
Father, look in mercy on all who are poor and powerless, and all who suffer ...  
Lord of glory,

**All hear our prayer.**

Your Son shared the life of his home and family at Nazareth:  
Father, protect in your love our neighbours,  
our families and this community of which we are a part ...  
Lord of glory,

**All hear our prayer.**

Father, we rejoice in our fellowship with the shepherds, the angels, the Magi,  
the Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph and all the faithful departed.  
In your unfailing love for us and for all people,  
hear and answer our prayers through your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**



## The peace

Christ is our peace.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

The old has passed away: behold, everything has become new.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 Hail to the Lord's anointed** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

May God the Father,  
who led the wise men by the shining of a star  
to find the Christ, the Light from light,  
lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord.

**All Amen.**

May God the Son,  
who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana,  
transform your lives and make glad your hearts.

**All Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit,  
who came upon the beloved Son  
at his baptism in the river Jordan,  
pour out his gifts on you  
who have come to the waters of new birth.

**All Amen.**

And the blessing of God the Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now  
and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4 As with gladness, men of old** (click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

All honour and praise be yours always and everywhere,  
mighty creator, ever-living God,  
through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord:  
for at this time we celebrate your glory  
made present in our midst.

In the coming of the magi

the King of all the world was revealed to the nations.

In the waters of baptism Jesus was revealed as the Christ,  
the Saviour sent to redeem us.

In the water made wine

the new creation was revealed at the wedding feast.

Poverty was turned to riches, sorrow into joy.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven

we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name  
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,

through Jesus Christ, our Lord;

and as we obey his command,

send your Holy Spirit,

that broken bread and wine outpoured

may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with worshipping Magi and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Lord God,  
the bright splendour whom the nations seek:  
may we who with the Magi  
have been drawn by your light  
discern the glory of your presence in your Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** Amen

**All** Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.