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### Epiphany Sunday, January 03, 2010

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 60: 1-6  
Psalm 72: 1 – 14  
Matthew 2: 1 – 12  
Ephesians 3: 1-6

Sermon Title: "A Light Still Shines"

Sermon Topic: Letting Christ's light shine through us

Sermon Purpose: To teach the people the importance of showing love and leading others to Christ.  
To teach the meaning of Epiphany.

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*Sermon Prayer: Lord, as we begin this New Year, we commit ourselves to you and seek your guidance as the wise men were guided to you by that great heavenly light. As we study your word open our hearts and our minds to the moving of the Holy Spirit within us and through us. Trusting in God's gracious love we pray in your name. Amen.*

Today, we celebrate Epiphany; the festival involving the light that led the wise men to Jesus at Bethlehem. In it, we learn of the revelation of God to the world, through Jesus Christ.

Here they were; men from the Gentile land of Persia, educated in the laws of the various religions of the then-known world, knowing the prophecies of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Micah. They saw the star of the King of the Jews, so they came to honor him.

They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were gifts only those of royal birth were permitted to enjoy. Gold was a symbol of unending wealth. Frankincense was a symbol of good health. Myrrh was a perfume and symbolized nobility. (It, long with the frankincense, was also used to embalm the bodies of the royals, after death.) These were all fine gifts for a not-so-common baby.

As Jesus grew, he learned about human life from his earthly parents: how hard it was, what work was involved, that there is joy even in poverty, and how to find it in simple things like the gift of a new morning.

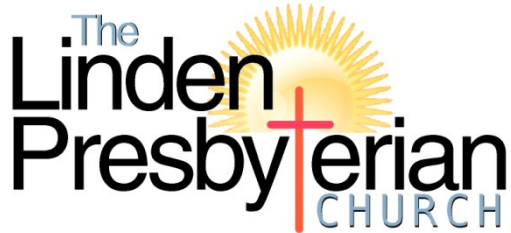
When he began his ministry, he taught and healed the people of the land. His wealth was the gifts of love and respect that people gave him. The protecting hand of God the Father and the healing he gave to others insured his health. His nobility was to be found in the crown of thorns given to him by frightened men as they crucified him for spreading God's Truth.

Still, he was the Light of the World. His truth was a homing beacon of a sinful nation that guided the repentant ones to a loving God. People of all the Jewish nation's **followed** that Light.

The disciples and the apostles spread the news of that Light throughout the world, as they led all those who would accept Jesus as their Savior in a righteous life.

That same torch has been passed from generation to sin-filled generation. God gave the world the Truth through Jesus. Jesus gave God's Truth to the apostles. The apostles gave it to the disciples, who passed down through time until it finally reaches us.





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Just as the guiding light of the Star of Bethlehem led the wise men, and the Light of the Word (the Son of God) led the apostles, we are led by the memory **of** and **by** our faith **in** that Light.

Matthew 28: 20 is often quoted in the service of the Christian funeral reminding us of that Light. In that verse, Jesus says, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age." By that, he means his presence could be made known **to** us and **through** us.

First, we must be willing to accept that light of love, guidance, and salvation in us. Then, we feel the presence of Christ in our lives, and we know we must obey. We must allow that light to shine forth and lead others to Christ, even if it means being imprisoned, poisoned, or killed (as was done to the apostles).

Will we be true to our faith? Will we let that Light shine forth to lead others to Christ, or will we put on extra-heavy coats ... so none of it leaks out?

Isaiah said, "Arise, shine; for **your** light has come, and the **glory** of the **Lord** has risen upon **you**."

Friends, there are so many things we all love about our community. Yet, there are many things we know to be wrong with it. There has been crime, political corruption, gangs and narcotics, neglect of the rites and rituals of the Sabbath day, and much more, corrupting our home. We must stand for our rights, and for that which we believe to be true; just as Christ and the apostles stood for what God wanted, commanded, and demanded.

We must also be willing to accept the consequences. And all the while, we must try to reduce the influence of hatred by showing love. We must band together to show that the power of love is stronger than the influence of hatred. It's going to be tough. Calvary was no bed of roses.

God gave it. The wise men followed it. Jesus taught it. The apostles spread it. Now, will **we** be able to show that **that** Light **still** shines in the world? I pray so.

"For behold, darkness shall cover the earth..., but the Lord will rise upon you and his glory will be seen upon **you**. And nations shall come to **your** light."

We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.

I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus...

Won't you let the Light shine outward? We begin by celebrating this Sacrament that **prepares** us, **restores** us, **enlightens** us, and **commissions** us.

Let us pray:

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested to the Gentiles the glory of your only-begotten Son: grant us that, being led by the light of the Holy Spirit, we may, in adoring love and with highest reverence, yield ourselves to your service; so that your kingdom of righteousness and peace may be upheld among all nations, to the glory of your name; through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

