

An Epiphany Reflection

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Why, you may be wondering, do we celebrate something called Epiphany? I remember wondering that for years. And for some reason it's still one of those liturgical church seasons that I have to remind myself of every once in a while – **what is Epiphany all about?** Well, here's some information – some of which you will be familiar, some of it may be new.

The actual day of Epiphany is always on January 6, the twelfth day after Christmas Day. In traditional Christian churches, Christmas, as well as Easter, is celebrated as a period of time, a season of the church year, rather than just a single day. So it is on this day that marks **the climax and end of the Christmas Season**. The Season of Epiphany will last until Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Season of Lent – just over 7 weeks from now.

The Season of Epiphany has traditionally used one image in particular – the imagery of **light**, as when light reveals what has been hidden in a dark place.

The term epiphany is a Greek word that literally means a “manifestation” or “revelation.” In its verb form it means “to show” or “to make known.” So the simple question is, What is it that is being revealed and made known? The simple answer: the presence of God.

The early church used this word, epiphany, to refer to the Incarnation – the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem that revealed that God is not only “out there” somewhere, but that God is also “here” – with and among us.

In other biblical stories, epiphany is the shepherds recognizing the newborn Jesus in the manger as the long-awaited Messiah. Epiphany is the Magi acknowledging the infant Jesus (who may have been up to 2 years old by the time they arrived) as the king of glory.

Later on in the Bible, Peter has an epiphany moment when he declares to Jesus, “You are the Christ.” The two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (after Jesus' crucifixion and the story of the resurrection) had an epiphany moment after their dinner guest broke bread and their eyes were opened – recognizing him as the risen Christ.

In order to make any of this relevant in our own lives, however, we have to take the next step and ask, **What's an epiphany for you and me? How do you and I know when we've had an epiphany moment?** Well here are a couple of things that may help:

An epiphany is:

- an unexplainable “knowing” that God is in our midst.

An epiphany is:

- an experience that can best be described as the light of God radiating in us – both inwardly and outwardly

An epiphany is:

- recognizing the face of Christ in others

Sometimes it comes as one of those “ah-ha” moments, like when a light bulb turns on. But often, epiphanies are recognized in retrospect, as we reflect back on some experience and then come to understand that the presence of God was somehow powerfully revealed to us.

Throughout this Season of Epiphany we will be looking at biblical stories of when the presence of God was revealed in Jesus, and when Jesus revealed God's presence to those with whom he ministered. And let us **pay close attention as we seek to understand how the presence of God is revealed in our lives, and in the life of this congregation.**

So be thinking about this question: **Where are the epiphanies that are awaiting my attention?** Watch and listen, and you will find them.

Amen.