

Epiphany ABC -- 2023
Isaiah 60.1-6///Ephesians 3.2-3,5-6///Matthew 2.1-12

→ *on the twelfth day of Christmas, my true gave to me: twelve drummers drumming, eleven pipers piping, ten lords-a-leaping, nine ladies dancing, eight maids-a-milking, seven swans-a-swimming, six geese-a-laying, five golden rings, four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves...and a partridge in a pear tree...*

→ now that is an extravagant parade of gifts...and according to advisors for PNC Wealth Management the cost for just those twelve drummers drumming alone would be over \$41K this year...up 3.1% over the cost of the same gift last year...

→ the giving of gifts seems like a long-distance activity even though Christmas was just two weeks ago....in fact by now perhaps some of us are now being gifted with the credit card bills...as a remembrance of our gift giving

→ however in many cultures around the world the exchanging and opening of gifts takes place today on this the feast of the Epiphany...

→ in fact... in earlier times....today was often called 2nd Christmas or “little Christmas”

→ quite literally...Epiphany means “revelation” or “shining forth” and today celebrates God’s **gift** to all the world...it is meant to be a day to recognize the “light” shining in the darkness

→ and the song we sing is the familiar “We Three Kings” that tell us about the story we just heard in the gospel...of the three wise kings visiting Bethlehem in search of the Messiah

→ and so today...we celebrate this feast...and...the recognition that Jesus is **God’s gift** to the world.

→as our Christmas season unfolds in our midst...Isaiah the prophet, throws some bold colors on the canvas about this day.....we heard those who were **searching** for God's presence in their lives that: *"The glory of the Lord has risen upon you" and "Nations shall come to your light, to the brightness of your dawn."*...

→and in our Gospel reading...we hear the familiar story of the three kings...on their journey....following a star...searching for the savior...the Messiah who would save the world.

→they see this strange new star in the sky...and overcome by it....they set out on a journey from their homeland in **search** of what this might mean

→....sometimes we too are **on a search**.

→we look for meaning and purpose, worth and value, substance and perseverance when it comes to life, relationships, and others....

→we also [at times] search for other things as well....the big merger, the perfect holiday, the next big idea, the ideal partner, the lost childhood, the newest trend, the shiniest toy...that one special person who will change our lives.

→today's feast is about our **search**....the search of the astrologers...the search of people throughout history for God's presence in our world and lives.....and the search of knowing and realizing that God is a part of our life.....

→and as always.....our task....and challenge....is to make this presence come alive..... especially when so many people these days seem to be searching for God....searching for answers....and searching for meaning

---that is what epiphany is: MAKING REAL THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN OUR LIVES AND WORLD

PAUSE

→if we listen to the people we encounter in the scriptures...especially during the Season of Advent and Christmas....they show us what it means to have God revealing his Son...his presence among us.....

→Mary listened...even when **what** she heard sounded impossible

→Joseph trusted....even when that **trust became difficult and was filled** with doubt

→the shepherds hoped...even when life offered them little reason to do so

→and the three kings searched, even when faced with danger....

→these ancestors of faith remind us that

→God **is** visible to us.... if are willing to open our eyes

--God **speaks** to us..... if we have the humility to listen

--God **reveals** to us his love and mercy....if we are willing to stand aside

and let it enter into our lives

→Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and today.... the wise kings...remind us that we have a God who keeps on appearing

--they teach us that God is present and active in our lives.....

PAUSE

the Feast of Epiphany..... **is** God's presence in our world....the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior

→[and] we come together once again today to sing and pray with our dreams and gifts...hopes and fears....trials and hardships....knowing that God will always be with us

PAUSE

→we may never celebrate the “perfect Christmas, or land the most important client, or acquire the brightest toy or satisfy our wildest dreams....

but we do have a God who wants to be part of our lives.... who changes us and gives us hope and understanding

→and just like the three wise kings of long ago....today we can celebrate Epiphany..... knowing that our search for God is over....