

Sermon – 9-1-11 – Epiphany

I heard a remark on the radio between Christmas and New Year which brought home to me how much the world out there knows about our season of Christmas.

There was a request for people to phone in and say if they had taken down their Christmas lights. ‘Aha’, I thought, ‘now we will hear about the Epiphany!’

No such luck.

The commentator assumed most people had taken everything down and remarked that those who leave up their lights do so just to look pretty in the winter.

My whole being wanted to shout out that Epiphany, the celebration of light, had not even begun.

The dictionary meaning of the word is:

‘A sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning, of something usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience.’

We talk about ‘finally seeing the light’.

Epiphany for the church is the season of light – rather like the Jewish Hanukkah.

The wise men were on a journey – following the light of a star and seeking the true light in a very special king.

They were not quite sure exactly what they were looking for but they knew they would recognize it when they found it.

We hear such a remark when someone is looking for love and in many ways the wise men were doing just that.

We are **all** on that journey – a journey to find the one who will give us that unconditional love we long for – the one we can truly trust – the one who will not betray us – the one we can worship.

We are all on a journey to find **the one** we can give everything we are and everything we have to and know that that one will always be there for us.

This can be a **physical** search or a **spiritual** search.

We really don't know what we are looking for but we will know it when we see it.

In the physical search we seek a life partner and for many that is the only search they have.

The unfortunate part is that everything goes right at first.

We know we have found love – we give everything we are and everything we have to them.

In fact we **worship** that person – we pay them homage.

Then comes the blow – they are no longer there for us.

It may be slow – the light gradually gets dimmer until it goes out.

Maybe it is a death – maybe a divorce – maybe it is a split or a betrayal.

We realize that we have been looking for love in all the wrong places.

The wise men looked for **the king** in all the wrong places.

They made assumptions that if this person was as special as they thought; he had to be in a palace.

So off they went to Herod's.

'Where is the child, who has been born King of the Jews? For we have observed his star in the rising and have come to pay him homage.'

Their perception of **a king** as in our perception of **love** was built on the world's view and not on God's.

Then came the betrayal!!

Herod used the insight that he had got from them and sought out the children of Bethlehem to kill them all.

His jealousy that there might be a rival out there led him to give this terrible order.

The wise men, however, **found** the origin of the light – they **found** their king – they **found** the one who would love them unconditionally and they knelt down and paid him homage.

Up to now we have been talking about a **physical** journey.

What about our **spiritual** journey?

How does that fit the story?

Everyone had a spiritual journey to find the centre of love, whether they know it or not – whether they see it as seeking a physical love or a divine love – whether it is in a church, a synagogue a mosque or even e-harmony.

We seek for the one we can truly trust – the one who will be there for us always – the one who will never let us down – the one we can truly give ourselves to – the one we can worship.

The seekers come into our churches and need to constantly hear and see in us the source of our faith and the love of the one we worship.

We need to be there for them – to be the star for them to find God.

There are those who have seen the light of the star and are on a journey towards glimpsing the source of that light.

In that journey they may, like the wise men, look for that source in all the wrong places.

Many of those on that journey have the joy of getting a glimpse of that light-source in a God-moment.

Their experiences lead them to journey back to their worlds to tell others of that experience.

Where are **we** in **our** journey?

Have we stopped too long to rest – is it time to get back on the road?

Have we been caught up in looking for God in all the wrong places?

The **wise men** thought that the obvious place to look for **a king** was in a **palace**.

Do we assume that the obvious place to look for **God** in in a **church**?

The wise men must have been really surprised to find the king in a poor family home and we are often surprised to find the source of the light in places **we** cannot even imagine.

Jesus, is the star – the light we follow.

Where was **he** born – where did **he** go - who did **he** come into contact.

Jesus did go to the synagogue but most of his ministry was outside.

If we look for him – if we journey to find him – if we want to give our gifts to him where should **we** look?

One of our baptismal vows is to ‘seek and serve Christ in all people’ – not just in **church people** but in **all** people.

Like Jesus, **most** of our lives are outside the place we worship – so let’s follow Jesus, the true light into the world so that we may find him and pay him homage.

In the church, yes, but also in those we meet on a day to day basis and in the **unexpected** places where we cannot even imagine the light would be – in the poor – in the rejected – in the sick.

So how long do we leave up **our** lights?

Do we turn them off when we leave the church on Sunday.

Do we say to the true light – ‘well that is that for this week – see you next or the next or the next?

Or do we see the light of our God in each person we meet and kneel down and pay them
homage?

Where do **we** see God?

Where is our, *'sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality or essential meaning, of something usually initiated by some simple, homely, or commonplace occurrence or experience.'*

When do we finally see the light and do we **recognize** it when we find it?

Where does the light stay on in our everyday life? Amen.