

Saturday 5th January 2019



Epiphany

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn...They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD. (Isaiah 60: 3 & 6)

It probably already feels that Christmas was a long time ago! All the food and parties are over or very nearly over, gifts unwrapped, family returned home and there's a slow return to whatever normal is. So much so that we can often neglect epiphany.

The word 'epiphany' means 'sudden and great revelation'. During epiphany we remember the journey of the magi from the east, who according to Matthew, followed a star in the heavens that led them to Jesus. Many nativity scenes show the magi arriving a little after the shepherds, but it is more likely that they arrived much later – Jesus may have even been a toddler when they arrived.

We call it epiphany because their arrival brought with it an understanding of who Jesus really was. In their gifts they demonstrate their revelation, their epiphany, of the truth of Jesus. Gold: expensive, the gift of kings for kings, symbolising Jesus as king. Frankincense: again expensive, used by priests in the temple, burnt to create a cloud to represent the presence of God, symbolising Jesus as God. Myrrh: probably the most expensive and rarest gift of all, used medicinally for healing, a painkiller and of course, one of the oils used to embalm the dead. Myrrh tells of Jesus the healer, bringing relief to the sick, but also foretells his death and burial.

The gifts of the magi revealed their understanding of who Jesus was and would be. If we were to take gifts to the infant Jesus, what would we take? There is a beautiful book called *The Three Wise Women*, by Hoffman and Russell (2002), where women take presents: bread, as a symbol that Jesus would break bread and be the bread of life; a story, because Jesus would teach in parables; a kiss, to show the love of Jesus for others but also a foretelling of how he would be betrayed.

What gift would you take to the infant Jesus? What does it reveal about Jesus and who you understand him to be?

God of Epiphany,
you reveal yourself to us in many ways:
in the stars at night,
the flowers of spring,
the glories of creation.
You reveal yourself to us in the Bible,
through prayer, and in worship.
Reveal yourself to us once more,
that we may know you more deeply,
and share our revelations with others
Amen

*Prayers for December written by Revd Claire Rawlinson
Picture – magi Photo by [Ben White](#) on [Unsplash](#)*