

Sermon 2012 EPIPHANY  
January 6, 2012  
Text: Ephesians 3:1-12  
Theme: "Who Is This God of Ours?"

**The word "epiphany" means, "to make manifest" or "to show forth." This season of the Church, which begins today, consists of between four and eight weeks after the season of Christmas in which the Scriptures reveal this Lord Jesus whose birth we just celebrated. We get to Epiphany by backing up from Easter. Easter is set by the lunar calendar each year. It is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox, which is March 21<sup>st</sup>. So, this year, the first full moon after March 21<sup>st</sup> is Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup> and therefore Easter is Sunday April 8<sup>th</sup>. Back up 6 weeks for Lent and February 22<sup>nd</sup> is Ash Wednesday. Back up six weeks and 5 days from Ash Wednesday and that gets us to today – the day of the Epiphany. So for the next 6 weeks, 5 days we will be hearing texts that show us who Jesus is through the work that he does among us.**

**Tonight, I will give you a road map for Epiphany based on the Gospel readings you will hear every Sunday between now and Transfiguration.**

**We begin this season every year with the day of Epiphany, January 6th, when the wise men or Magi came from the East to worship this one born King of the Jews. Here entered the non-Jewish world and here began the world's fascination with the son of**

**Mary and Joseph the Carpenter. He is something utterly other than every other baby ever born, but who and what exactly is he? That is the question the season of Epiphany answers.**

**On Sunday we jump forward 30 years to his Baptism and the beginning of his public ministry. He immediately began to show us exactly what and who he is on the day we call, The Baptism of Our Lord. We knew he was special but during Epiphany we begin to see that Jesus truly is God just as surely as the Father is God. Here we see the full humanity of Jesus in need of Holy Baptism like all humans, and we see the full divinity as the Father speaks from heaven and says, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!" It will not be easy for Jesus. Right after his Baptism he is led into the wilderness by Satan himself. Jesus will participate in everything human... both good and bad.**

**From his Baptism, we move, on the Second Sunday after the Epiphany, to the calling of the first disciples, Philip and Nathaniel. We see that like the Father, the Son is omniscient. He saw Nathaniel before Nathaniel ever met him but he promises that we, his later disciples, will see greater things – even the gates of heaven opened as say for instance, someone rises from the dead after being crucified.**

**Moving on to the third Sunday after the Epiphany Jesus calls the amazing and soon to be quite famous St. Peter who not only became one of his closest friends but would lead the apostles along with St. James and St. Paul to establish the Church on Earth that waits today for the return of the Lord. Like his Father used the prophets, Jesus uses common people and elements to accomplish his will. He uses fishermen, tax collectors, tent makers along with words, water, bread and wine. We learn in Epiphany that we should not be surprised when he uses us. Isaiah calls us,**

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.” Be prepared to be called upon, even as Peter was called upon, by Jesus.**

**On the fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, Jesus demonstrated his complete power over Satan and his minions. There was a man possessed by a demon who was listening to him teach on Sabbath. The demon tried to stop him from preaching the Word by crying out and making a scene, but the demon found himself cast out into darkness. We learn in Epiphany that Jesus, like his Father, is omnipotent and is not in the least threatened by Satan. If you understand that, it sort of ruins all the scary stories we like to tell. There is no contest. Jesus wins. Period. Why do we ever worry about anything?**

**On the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, we see Jesus have compassion and heal Peter's mother-in-law. It is a strange story on the surface. Peter's mother-in-law was sick. Okay, so what? What does that have to do with our salvation? But like his Father, Jesus pauses from the eternal matters of the universe to care for one of his creatures who has a fever. He leaves the 99 to care for the one. We learn in Epiphany that this Savior of ours truly cares about every little detail in our lives.**

**On the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, Jesus heals leprosy. This is one of the marks of the Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament. Leprosy was a disease that set us outside of fellowship with others just as sin sets us outside God's family. We don't always think about it, but our sins break our relationship with God. But Jesus, like his father, has complete power over every physical malady and every spiritual malady and nothing can make him unclean. He can touch a leper and remain healthy. He can touch a sinner and remain holy. Instead of unclean things making him dirty, he makes unclean things holy. Epiphany teaches us that Jesus makes us holy through his Word, his water and his very body and blood and no dirt can withstand his power.**

**Finally, every Epiphany season ends with the Transfiguration. Peter, James and John see the one who was visited by the three**

**kings now reveal himself plainly to be the King of all creation, Christ the King. Before we descend into the dark valley of Lent, we spend a few moments on the Mount of Transfiguration and we remember.**

**We may have difficulties and challenges and sadnesses, but when all is said and done and the world is over, we are sons and daughters of the King of the Universe. He has paid for all sin with his own soul on the cross and because we are baptized into his name, we inherit eternal life. Now we walk with him in this life and continue growing in him. He is vast and no matter how long we know him, we will never possess him fully. That's okay. He possesses us fully. That's what we learn in Epiphany.**