



Epiphany, Year A – January 2, 2011

Matthew 2. 1-12

A Homily preached by the Rev'd Tara Livingston

"And they knelt down and paid him homage". In front of a mere woman and a baby they knelt and honoured God in human flesh. Their status, insignificant; their appearance, inconsequential, because there in front of this boy who would be king the wise men humbled themselves and knelt.

What would make you drop everything to bring gifts and to bear witness? What gifts would you bring? Who would have you kneel in all humility putting your earthly status aside? Where would you travel to so that you might be the first to say "I came, I saw, I worshipped"?

We live in a world of idol worship. We live in a world where young women fall to their knees at the sight of Justin Bieber. We live in a world where people queue up for hours to be first in line to buy the latest offering at the Apple store. We live in a world where many put blind faith in leaders and are certain that they will save us from our woes.

So how might we find our way back to a baby who is the light of the world? How might we refocus our attention back on the one of whom it was foretold "Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn"? The light of Christ was not just offered in a special celestial event some 2000 years ago. It was not a one time offering from God only to be witnessed by those present at the time. No. The light of which Isaiah speaks is carried in the hearts of each one of us. In our hearts we carry the promise of Jesus' love for all of humanity. The light which we seek can be found in our neighbours both those who sit beside us this morning and those whom we meet on the streets.

Some years ago I met a man who bowed to me when I saw him for the first time. He placed his hands in a praying position in front of his chest and inclined his head and shoulders towards me. At first I was embarrassed, humiliated by the undue attention. It seemed to be a sign of such respect and I was certain I was unworthy of it. And then he told me what it meant. In the Hindu tradition it is custom to practice this gesture of reverence and it means "the god in me greets the god in you".

The God in me greets the God in you. It is beautiful in its simplicity and graceful in its splendour.

The danger for me in that moment, the moment in time when a man was bowing his head towards me in reverence, was to think that it had anything to do with me. I was, I am, but a God carrier and all of the best things about me are but a gift from God. It is God who gave me a voice so that I might spread the good news of Christ. It is God who provides me the ears to listen to someone's pain and the hands that I might reach out and soothe them with a touch. It is that way for each of you. All of the best things about you are to be received as a gift from God and treated as such, with reverence and with awe. You and I are God carriers, vessels through which God's work can be done.

As we attempt to greet the light of Christ in others there are dangers. One danger might be to think that it is for us to judge as to whether or not that light is present. We must assume, because we have faith that the light of Christ came into the world for all of humanity, that each person that we meet has God's light in them. For some it shines brightly and is easy to reverence and for others it is but a dim shimmer waiting to burst out into its full potential.

Perhaps this is how we might find our way back to the stable to find ourselves bowing alongside the wise men. Perhaps by not only recognizing the light of Christ that is found in each one of us but by seeking it in the hearts of those we meet, we too might find God's power that is hidden in humility. We too might find ourselves kneeling in awe at the presence of the boy who would be king.

The celebration of Epiphany is one where we commemorate Christ's coming to the whole of humanity. It is our recognition, revelation if you will that God is not an abstract concept to be debated but is rather a concrete reality to be cherished. It is real, it is present not on the pages of a book but in the midst of our every day lives. It is the realization that we, each of us, holds within us the promise of Christ's light.

So what might make you drop everything and bring gifts as the wise men did back then? May be by arriving with food for a neighbour in need.

Who might make you want to fall on bended knee in reverence and in awe? Perhaps someone who works in Christ's light everyday and who toil on behalf of those in need.

And where might you go to say "I came, I saw, I worshipped"? You might go to be with a community such as this where we all stand – and kneel, united in worshipping a baby who would grow to be king.

I ask of you this. I ask that you allow your light to shine brightly in witness to your faith. I ask that you recognize the light of Christ in all who you meet. And I ask that you, that we, worship and give thanks for the gift of a baby, born into a lowly human form and yet who was destined to save us all.

And for that, thanks be to God.