

The Revealing of God in Christ Jesus

Bishop Amy Odgren January 2022

I hope you had a meaningful and joy-filled Christmas. Family traditions, gatherings, and our worship celebrations have all been experienced very differently for the past couple of years. I understand how this season is difficult for individuals and families. Many of us have changed plans in order to keep loved ones or ourselves safe and healthy. Celebrating Christmas in new ways may have felt unusual for some, but for the most part, I have heard people say that they have enjoyed slowing down - not feeling like they had to be a part of the Christmas rush, intentionally keeping things simple, and finding joy in establishing new traditions in smaller gatherings. Some have simply noted that it was refreshing staying home.

This year, I had the opportunity to take some time away from the office and spend more time at home between Christmas and the New Year. It was wonderful! I used my snowshoes almost every day, shoveled *a lot* of snow, watched several movies, and gave my weary muscles a good break in our sauna. It was especially moving "seeing" Christmas morning through the eyes of my 7 year-old grandson. But I have to admit that one of my favorite times of the day during vacation was in dawn's first light – just after my dog nudged me awake, I would turn on the Christmas tree lights and slowly wake up to the day before bundling up and sporting my headlamp to head outside into the brisk air. The LED light shining brightly on the snow in the middle of the woods would safely guide my steps. I love this time of the morning - when the eastern sky is but a dim glow, when the woods are quiet except for the crunch of the snow underfoot, and where there is reliance on a bright light to lead both me and my companion without obstacle. Reliance on light, enjoyment of twinkling lights, watching the light of the morning dawn – all good things.

January 6th was Epiphany this year, the day after the twelve-day celebration of Christmas (or, in some liturgical calendars, the twelfth day of the Christmas season). It is a day when many focus on light. Christians celebrate this day by remembering the journey of the Magi who found their way to Jesus by following a bright heavenly body, usually represented by a star. The English word "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means "appearing" or "revealing." Epiphany focuses on God's self-revelation in Christ. On this day, some Christian traditions pay special attention to the visit of the Magi. Other traditions focus on the baptism of Jesus, especially the voice from heaven that identifies Jesus as God's Son. In either case, the emphasis is upon God making known to the world who God is through the Light of the world, Jesus, the divine Son.



The theological essence of Epiphany is found in 2 Timothy 1:10: *"And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News."* If you were reading this verse in Greek, you would find the word *epiphaneia* where we have "appearing." God has made "all of this" plain to us through the epiphany – the revealing of Christ. But what is "all of this"? We find an answer in the previous verse: *"For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. God did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was God's plan from before the beginning of time-to show us God's grace through Christ Jesus."*

The original language makes it clear that "all of this" is God's plan (or purpose) and grace. In other words, through Jesus, God not only reveals who God is to us, but also reveals God's plan to save us, a plan that is centered in grace. The gracious plan of God reflects and confirms God's gracious character. And the *revealing* of Epiphany reminds us that Christ is not just the Savior to a select people, but the Savior of *all* people.

Epiphany is a time of great celebration and rejoicing. During Advent we spent four weeks waiting and anticipating the promise of the coming King. At Christmas we celebrated his arrival and birth, and now, during this Epiphany season, we continue that rejoicing as we see God and Savior revealed in Christ Jesus. We thank God for this marvelous revealing. As we enter a new year, I encourage all of us to renew our commitment to sharing this good news with the world.

Prayer for Epiphany

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only begotten Son to the peoples of the earth. *We thank you for making yourself known to us in Jesus Christ. Thank you for helping us to know your character, your glory, and your grace. Lead us, O God, by your Light, and fill us afresh with your power, so that we might share the good news of Christ with the world . . . beginning with our friends and neighbors. Amen.*