

Sunday January 4, 2026
(Sunday before) Epiphany

Sermon: “Epiphanies Happen”

Today is the eleventh of the twelve days of Christmas. Tuesday is Epiphany. So who here can tell me what an epiphany is? An epiphany is a sudden insight, realization, perception, apprehension, or intuitive grasp of meaning or of the way things are. In the context of the church, Epiphany is a divine revelation. Epiphany is the day that it was revealed to the wise men that the infant in Bethlehem was, and still is, God’s own child; that God is revealed in and through the life of Jesus.

What I wondered is, why is it the day that the magi perceive this revelation of God that is called Epiphany, and not the day that Mary had her visit from the angel Gabriel and told her she would bear God’s son, or the night that Joseph was told in a dream that Mary would bear God’s son, or the shepherds on the hillside that saw an angel who told them to go to Bethlehem and see God’s son..... why? Why one and not the others? I mean, aren’t they all epiphanies; divine revelations? Why the distinction? And, if it is only the magi who had an epiphany, does that mean it was a one-time event? Does that mean that God never reveals Godself to anyone else, at any other time, in any other way throughout the history of humankind?

That’s a lot of questions. Besides me, who’s brain is starting to hurt thinking about all of this, or does anyone other than me even wonder about this stuff? So, let’s start with the easy question. Was the epiphany, the divine revelation, a one-time event? What do you think? My vote is for ‘no’. God reveals Godself through nature – beautiful sunsets, gorgeous flowers, brilliant tropical fish and birds, and even duckbill platypuses, platypi? God reveals Godself in acts of justice, and caring, and healing, and reconciliation, and..... God revealed Godself to Adam and Eve in the garden, to Moses in the burning

bush and on the mountain when he received the ten commandments, to the people of Israel through the voice of the prophets, to Mary and the Shepherds through angels (literally messengers of God) and to Joseph (both the son of Jacob and the husband of Mary) in dreams, and to you and to me through people we have known and in countless other ways. So, no, epiphany was not a one time event. Epiphanies happen all the time and in many different ways.

So why the magi, and not Mary, Joseph, or the shepherds? What do you think? The only difference I can see is that Mary and the shepherds had angels tell them, and Joseph had an angel tell him in a dream, but there is no mention of angels when it comes to the magi. They seem to have come to the realization that Jesus was the son of God all on their own.

So far we have concentrated on divine revelations, and not on all types of epiphanies. Epiphanies have happened, and still happen all the time. There was the guy who was working on microwave communications and discovered that his chocolate bar had melted and microwave ovens were born. There was the guy who realized that raw milk sometimes made people ill and realized that heating the milk killed the organisms that made people ill, and pasteurized milk became a thing. There was the guy who was about to retire and realized that the congregation may not even need to hire a successor because chatgpt could replace him. I typed “write a short sermon on epiphanies” into chatgpt and this is what it wrote.

*“Good morning, everyone. Today, I want to talk about something beautiful and powerful: **epiphanies**. You’ve probably had moments in your life when something suddenly becomes crystal clear, when an idea or truth hits you so deeply that it changes your perspective forever. That moment is often called an epiphany—a divine revelation or realization.*

The word epiphany comes from the Greek word epiphaneia, meaning “manifestation” or “appearance.” In the Christian tradition, the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles, represented by the visit of the Magi, the wise men from the East. For them, seeing Jesus in the humble manger was a moment of divine clarity, a sudden understanding that the Savior of the world had come not just for the Jewish people but for all of humanity.

But, epiphanies aren’t just reserved for moments like the Magi’s visit. They can happen in our everyday lives, too. Sometimes, it’s in a quiet prayer, a moment of worship, or even just in the midst of our struggles. When we ask God for clarity or guidance, sometimes He gives us that “Aha!” moment that changes everything. It’s as if the fog clears, and we see things as they truly are.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul had an epiphany on the road to Damascus. He was blinded, physically and spiritually, until God revealed Himself to him. In that moment, Saul’s life was radically transformed, and he became Paul, one of the greatest missionaries of the early Church. That moment of divine intervention, that epiphany, was the turning point in his life.

So, what can we learn from these moments of revelation?

- 1. **Epiphanies show us God's presence.** Sometimes, God reveals Himself to us in unexpected ways. We may not always see it coming, but when the revelation happens, we know it’s from Him.*
- 2. **Epiphanies invite change.** Just as Saul was transformed into Paul, our moments of clarity can change the way we live. They challenge us to grow, to let go of old ways, and to step into a new chapter in our faith.*
- 3. **Epiphanies point to God’s greater plan.** When we have these moments of understanding, we often see how everything fits together in a*

bigger picture. It's a reminder that God has a purpose for us, even when we don't fully understand what's happening at the time.

*In our daily lives, we might not always get a dramatic vision or experience like Paul or the Magi, but we can still have those moments of divine insight—whether through Scripture, prayer, or simply the quiet moments of life. **God still speaks to us, and He is still revealing Himself to us.***

So, let's pray for more of these epiphanies. Let's ask God to open our eyes and hearts, to help us see His presence and purpose in everything we do. And may we never forget that every moment of revelation is a gift that brings us closer to the One who created us.

Amen.”

Epiphanies still happen, but I think they work not when we are sure of how things are, but when we wonder about things. Go and wonder. Wonder about the nature of God. Wonder about the society we've created. Wonder about what kind of society God would create. Wonder how we get from here to there.