

The Light of Jesus

January 7, 2018

We continue our annual pilgrimage. We move from the season of Christmas into the season of Epiphany, yesterday being the feast of the Epiphany. If you've been around these seasons for very long, or look beyond the church, Epiphany doesn't get a lot of attention.

We seem to know what to do with the birth of Jesus, and even the days leading up to it. We seem to know what to do with the death of Jesus and the resurrection, but when we look at the life of Jesus we tend to not give so much attention. Yet, when you think about it, why not? That is the light, the life that he lived.

Jesus emerges from the baptism waters, like we emerge every year from that season of Christmas, where we seem to be secluded. Winter weather generally brings us in to the holidays and family get-togethers. Some of us travel, some of us host, but there is this closing in. The regular schedule of our worship routine is broken a bit. We're disconnected a bit as we focus on Christmas. But now I ask a question that I think we should ponder throughout Epiphany, and that is the question of the season of Epiphany.

First of all, what was the light of the life of Jesus? How did he live his life? Who did he befriend? What bridges did he create between people who were separated from one another? What discriminations, what arrogance, did he challenge? What social, but well-hidden, sins did he expose by simply being who Jesus was? What light from God did he bear?

I challenge you to really consider the story of Jesus, the part between his birth and his death. It's the gospel story. He lived a life of healing, of friendship. He didn't seek fame, he didn't seek fortune, he didn't seek dominance. He didn't start this institution that has lasted 2000 years. He lived humbly, simply, lovingly. He lived the life that God had given him to live. He treasured the life that God had given him to live, and sometimes it was a very difficult life.

I've often spoken of the metaphor of baptism, and today we focus on his baptism and his emergence from the waters. In my own thoughts, and much of what I've read, baptism is often a metaphor for not just the joyful religious rituals that we go through that mark those passages, but also those difficult times, those diagnoses, those difficult things, those baptisms by fire so to speak, from which we emerge. And who are we after we emerge out of those difficult, painful, challenging times?

This is a question of Epiphany. It's an incredible season for us to consider what the light of Jesus was to our world, and how that light has continued. How has it been followed, and how has it been misrepresented? I think you and I would agree that what the life of Jesus was, and what the world has often tried to make it, are two very different stories.

That is the first question that we have over the next 5 weeks.

The second question is, what light are we bearing as we emerge into the world? What ways do we choose to follow? How do we choose to exercise our own thankfulness for receiving the gift of the life that we have received? What grace, what forgiveness, what healing flows from our life?

That is the second, very powerful, question to ask during this season of Epiphany.

So as we emerge out of the baptism of single digit and negative temperatures over the last 12 to 14 days, as we emerge from the more glorious season of Christmas into this more simple, and yet profound season of Epiphany, ponder those 2 questions. What really was the light of Jesus, and what is your own light, as we live our life in this world?

Amen