

II Epiphany 2024

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 12.6-16 St. Mark 1.1-11



This is Good News...Mark tells us...about Jesus Christ, God's Son...and it began with John the Baptist fulfilling Isaiah's Prophecy written 700 years earlier...

...God said, "I will send my messenger ahead of you, "Someone shouting in the desert, Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!"

The "messenger" in Isaiah's Prophecy is John the Baptist...the "you" in his prophecy is Jesus.

The Epiphany Season Gospels are about the striking appearances Jesus makes to different people at different times. His appearances are conveyed in ways the people he appears to are most likely to understand and get the message about who he...the Son of God!

His first striking appearance was to the shepherds on Christmas Day. The shepherds were busy watching their sheep when the angels told them about the birth of Jesus. The shepherds were Jews and they understood angels were God's messengers. They heard the message the angel brought...Jesus our Savior is born. We memorialize the song the angels sang at every Mass in the Gloria...*"Glory to God in the Highest; and peace to people of Good Will"*.

Shepherds understood angels but the visitors from far away countries, the Magi, understood stars. They may have been Zoroastrian priests. Zoroastrianism is the religion of Ancient Persia and is still practiced today. The Magi studied stars and it was no ordinary star that led them to Jesus. It was brighter than any star in the sky. The gifts the strangers brought tell a story: Gold tells us Jesus is our King; Frankincense tells us Jesus is our God; Myrrh...used to anoint dead bodies...tells us Jesus will sacrifice himself for us

Last week we saw Jesus sending Mary and Joseph into a panic when he stayed behind in Jerusalem while they began the long trip home to Nazareth. When Mary and Joseph finally found him, he was having deep

theological discussion with the doctors of theology in the Temple. He was doing God's work in God's house. We must be doing God's work too...here is his house and everywhere else.

The Baptism of Jesus, which we celebrate today, marks the beginning of his public ministry. Mark describes John as a wild looking man wearing camel hair clothes and a leather belt. John said the man coming after him was so great he wasn't worthy enough to untie his shoes. John said his own baptism was with water...Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. When John baptized Jesus, the skies opened up and the Holy Spirit appeared like a dove. God called Jesus his own dear Son whom he loves. The Scriptures also record God calling Jesus his own dear Son at the Transfiguration...an epiphany that concludes his public ministry.

The baptism of Jesus ultimately points to our own baptism. When we are baptized, we begin a new life in Jesus. We become part of the Body of Christ...the Church. We are filled with the Holy Spirit who guides and strengthens us every day of our lives. Everlasting life isn't just a possibility; it is a fact here and now and it begins at our baptism.

What we can learn from the Epiphany Season is how we can be good epiphanies...good appearances...for Jesus. What about the appearances of others in our own lives? We should think of the many people who have been epiphanies in our lives. How should we respond to their appearances? How do we become epiphanies for Jesus?

Saint Paul gives us some good advice on being epiphanies for Jesus. Our love for each other must be sincere...not phony; hate what is evil...do not hate people; hold on to what is good; love each other without reservation; show respect for one another; work hard...don't be lazy; share what we have with others; be hospitable and kind to others.

Mark tells us he brings us Good News about Jesus Christ. We should not hesitate to share that Good News with others...the Holy Spirit will guide us to say the right things at the right time...to make a straight path for the Lord to follow...into our hearts and the hearts of others.

