

Sunday January 8

“Do you see what I see?”
A Celebration of Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6, Matt 5:12-14, Matt. 2:1-12

The season of Epiphany arrived quietly on last Friday, January 6. The day of epiphany is the “12th night” after Christmas. It is the celebration of the arrival of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. The word epiphany comes from the Greek *epi* (επι) which means around (as in epicenter – around the center) and the Greek *phanos* (φανος) which has the same root as our word phantom (as in appearance). So in the season of epiphany we focus on the appearance of God/Christ around or to us.

The first lesson introduces Isaiah’s imagery of God’s light rising upon us – that we might shine! This notion of letting your light shine is then seen in the gospels through Jesus’ statement that “**You** are the light of the world. A city built upon the hill cannot be hidden. You do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, you put it on the table so that it gives light to all in the house.” (Matt 5:14)

Which brings us to our conversation of the day. (Keep in mind our conclusion from last week: our efforts to move ahead in the new life constantly meet the old life – which remains in effect everywhere except in our faith journey) **So, how does seeing God change us?** What is the difference between seeing God the creator (Creator of the stars of night) and seeing Christ who calls us into God’s kingdom?

As I approached this question I was driven to share with you what a blessing in my life it has been to have to preach. (1000 times, by now) While I thought of this in terms of what we see in God’s word and how it changes us – it pushed me to a different conclusion. The discipline of preaching is that you accept the demand that **you find** what the Word says and that **you prepare to give an account** of it. You expect/demand that it speak to you. (Strictly speaking this formulation has a theological error – but the center point is that if we expect nothing from God, nothing from ourselves – then, big surprise! we get very little)

Now I believe that God can break into any life. But it is also clear that if we do not seek God, if we do not seek God’s purpose, or pursue God’s word, then we stack the deck against God’s light entering our life. **Expect** God to speak to you. Pursue it. **Demand of yourself** that you find what God says. **Faith is not a passive pursuit.** (Thus ends the sermon I had not anticipated)
Which bring us back to the question of the day, the journey of this season. How will seeing God change us? (The answer is the progression of the church year.)

We have seen the humble grace of God with us. We have seen the wise men –embody the pursuit of the star. In the weeks ahead – we will see Jesus arise as a prophet of the Kingdom – announcing that God is at hand. We will see him name the disciples and call them to the faithful life. We will see his power to heal and usher people into the Kingdom life. And we will (through Lent) see as he outlines the sacrificial love – which he will embody – to which he calls us. It is this breadth of Jesus life and call which challenges us to the depth of discipleship from which we see (as in Matthew 25:31, and the last Sunday of the church year) that every time **we serve – the one we meet** across the table is our Lord in need. Whenever we move beyond our self through service and love – **Christ is the one we meet.** As we grow in Christ’s service – we meet him as our neighbor, and in our neighbor’s need, we see him.

I hope as we journey through this year – that you will expect to see God and to be challenged. And that as you grow in service and love you will truly meet our Lord, the light of the world, God with us.