

St Thomas' and Saint Thomas Church of the Air

Epiphany I

January 12, 2025

rmcneely+

grant that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and also may
have grace and power to fulfill the same.

We began the Season of Epiphany on Monday of last week.

Five Sundays this year, when the church

And the collects, epistle and gospels

Point us toward the manifestation

or the appearance of our Lord to the world.

And to ourselves.

It begins in mystery

The visit of the Magi

To the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

All of them somehow knew that Jesus was

The Messiah/King who had been prophesied.

Jesus spent the next 30 years of His life without saying or doing
anything to accept the title,

Nothing to hint of His lineage,

Nothing to give notice that He was the One,

The incarnate Son of God

Come to save us all.

I was something of a young man when I made a discovery:

Beginning on Christmas Day,

The Prayer Book and the calendar

Roughly trace the life of Jesus.

The Church has us figuratively strap on our sandals

And walk with Jesus

From His Birth

To His Circumcision

To the slaughter of the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem

And the retreat to Egypt
 and subsequent return to Nazareth.
 To this week's Gospel account of the time Jesus
 Was found with the astonished learned men of the Temple
 To His baptism and temptation in the desert
 To His three year ministry in Galilee and Judea
 To His triumphal entry into Jerusalem,
 To the Last Supper
 To His trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension:
 We walk with Him every step of the way.
 I was astonished and proud of my discovery.

Thankfully, my family assured me that I was not the first to make this important discovery.

 Before I went to, then, Father Morse, to inform him
 of how the Prayer Book worked.

Today's Gospel story only enhances the mystery
 A perfect selection for exploring the manifestation of Jesus.

To the world.

It asks the question: just Who is this Jesus?

This 12 year old boy from the backwater town of Nazareth

This boy of no education or religious training

 This boy who had not attended the Rabbinical

 Centers of learning

 Hillel or Shammai

Who had the very highest of the Temple in Jerusalem

 In a quandary.

 How did He come to such knowledge?

 Such insight?

 Such a new way of looking at things?

 Such a brilliant new approach?

But then Jesus receded back into obscurity

 For another 18 years.

We will pick up His story in the coming weeks
 But for now let us consider His Epiphany
 His Manifestation
 His appearance
 In our lives.

I suspect its personal to each one of us
 Each of us has a story of finding Jesus
 A story of just how He was manifest to you
 How you came to know Him.

But let's consider for the moment the Epistle of St John to the
 Romans
 Today's Epistle
 St Paul makes three strong points about Christian ethical life.

First, that we must dedicate our lives to God.
 Our entire lives to God.
 Is Paul likening our dedication, our sacrifice
 To the animals sacrificed in the Temple
 Of the old covenant with God?
 But, no. Not a sacrifice in death
 But, rather, in life
 A life lived in living sacrifice,
 holy and acceptable to God
 A sacrifice which Paul clarifies
 Is our reasonable service.

Service during our entire lives
 And not merely the body, as the Jewish
 and in the pagan animal sacrifices.
 But in the mind.

Unlike the rest of creation
 Mankind was created with a mind
 With rational thought
 With intellect
 So the sacrifice demanded of Christians
 Is lifelong, reasonable and rational way of life.

Second, Paul admonishes that our lives are not to be
 Necessarily conforming to the morals, the ethics,
 The societal norms of the day.
 Or to our own self will,
 Or to the passing trends and popular philosophy of mankind.

Our reasonable, rational sacrifice,
 Our lives
 Must be transformed not to the transitory whims of the World
 But must be transformed
 By the renewing,
 The consecration
 The adherence to God's will in our lives
 That good, acceptable and perfect
 Will of God in our lives.

The Collect for the week enters here
 We pray in the Collect for us to know and perceive
 The will of God in our lives.
 That God shows us what He has in mind for us to do
 What we ought to do in His service.

And knowing that
 That we may have His grace and power to faithfully
 Fulfill the same.

It is a tall order.
 One requiring the abundant grace of God
 To both know His will
 And to fulfill it.

Paul then cautions us:

He warns that in determining the
reasonable service we ought to perform
that we should not think more highly of ourselves
than we ought to think.

Do not let our inflated opinions of ourselves
take us further than our realistic God given ability
will carry us.

It is a process to be undertaken soberly
Soberly, not in the sense of avoiding inebriation by alcohol or
drugs as we use the word today;
But soberly in the sense of careful and calm, rational thought.
Prayerfully within the bounds of the grace and faith
given us by God.

Thirdly Paul here raises the recurring theme of the Body of Christ.
And it is here that the Epiphany focuses.

The Church which Paul sees as the Body of Christ

An organic

living

spiritual and

perhaps physical organism

Consists of many members

You and me

And all the faithful in Christ.

We make up the Body.

One body

St Thomas' is but one body in the larger body of Christ.

But each of us individually

Holds an office within the body

A different office

A different part of the body, if you will.

Following the anatomical analogy
 each of us is a different organ in the Body.
 With a different, but very necessary function
 That allows the body to live and work in the world.

Each part is essential
 It may feel to you that it is infinitesimally small
 But it is a vital and necessary organ or part
 Without which the body does not function so well.

And each member,
 each part,
 each organ is within one Body.
 One whole.
 And each part, each organ is a part of one another.

I in you,
 You in me
 We all in each other
 And all of us together in the Body of Christ.

When you stop to contemplate all this
 Can you help but see or feel, or hear
 Jesus in it?

Is not this glorious body of Christ
 This little miracle church
 In Pacific Heights, San Francisco
 The manifestation of Jesus, the Christ?
 Is it not a living, breathing physical
 Appearance of Jesus in our lives?

Can we not see, touch, hear, smell and almost taste it?
 In this little oasis of God's love thriving in a broken world
 Is not the Son of God
 Our Saviour manifested among us?

Aren't there times here that you can almost feel it?

So what do we do with and about it?

What is the take away from the Collect, the Epistle and the Gospel of this day?

We must continually pray for the saving grace of God

That by that grace,

And with Jesus manifested, appearing in our lives,

we discern the will of God,

perceive and know His will

and be granted the grace and power

faithfully to fulfill the same.