

EPIPHANY: IN FAITH WE PROCLAIM GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 14, 2007

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

John 2:1-11

Saving the Best for Last

Epiphany, a Greek word that means “manifestation” or “appearance,” is a season that concludes the Christmas cycle and focuses on God’s presence made known to all the world as revealed in Jesus Christ. Emmanuel, “God with us,” heralds God’s inclusive love for the entire world. God incarnate, the Word made flesh (John 1:14), reveals to us the glory of God.

One of my favorite Epiphany hymns includes the refrain “God in flesh made manifest,” and the word “manifest” occurs no less than seven additional times throughout the hymn’s four verses. The hymn truly celebrates the meaning of Epiphany and catalogs the numerous manifestations of God’s glory that we encounter in the various gospel texts that are read during the Epiphany season.

The season began with the story of the visit of the Gentile magi visiting the infant king Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12), followed by the account of Jesus’ baptism and his affirmation as God’s Son, the Beloved (Luke 3:21, 22). Over the course of the next several weeks, we will hear Jesus’ inaugural sermon, see him call his first disciples, be a witness to his teachings and healings, and finally experience that climactic moment when Jesus is transfigured before us and reveals his true glory (Luke 9:28-36).

This week’s gospel text, often referred to as “The Wedding at Cana,” introduces a lengthy section of John’s Gospel (2:1—11:44) that includes seven key miracles that Jesus performed. Each of these miracles (signs) point to Jesus as the true Messiah, the Son of God. At the wedding in Cana, the wine had run out. Following Jesus’ instructions, the servants fill six stone jars with water that miraculously transforms into wine, causing the chief steward to comment that the bridegroom had “kept the best until last” (2:10, *CEV*).

Jesus himself embodies that which is best, now and forever. Following centuries of hopeful waiting, his coming into the world brought us “the true light that shines on everyone” (John 1:9, *CEV*) and “all the kindness and all the truth of God” (John 1:14b, *CEV*). Prior to his death on a cross, Jesus made a new agreement with his followers. The Passover wine became his blood (Luke 22:20), poured out for us so that we could be set free from sin and death and inherit eternal life (Romans 3:24-26; 6:22, 23). When we

gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we experience a foretaste of the feast to come – the wedding feast of the Lamb when God's reign over all creation will be manifest at the end of history. It will be a time of celebration when Christ (the Lamb) and his people (the bride) will be united (Revelation 19:5-8). "God will bless everyone who is invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9a). Yes, God has saved the best for last!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Cambodia – With thanks to God for the high demand for the Children's Bible and the new Khmer Standard Version Bible, and for the expanding literacy program, and with prayers for God's blessing on new building plans and relationships with church leaders; **Laos** – With thanks to God for the recently published Revised Lao Common Language New Testament, and with prayers for God's guidance as work begins on recording the New Testament into an audio format and for the effective distribution of both the print and audio versions; **Vietnam** – With thanks to God that the government has approved the production of New Testaments for some ethnic minority groups, and with prayers for continued permission to produce Scriptures to meet the needs of the Vietnamese Church, and for wisdom for work on revising the Vietnamese Bible.

Activity Corner: "Wedding Feast of the Lamb" Poster

Supplies needed: Bible; poster board; markers or crayons; old magazines; scissor; glue or paste.

Across the top of a poster board write the words from Revelation 19:9, "God will bless everyone who is invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." Look through magazines for pictures of people (representing various races and ethnicities) and pictures of different kinds of food and create a festive poster that demonstrates the theme of Revelation 19:9. Talk about what it will be like to be united with God at such a feast. Conclude by reading Isaiah 25:6-10a, Revelation 7:9-12, and Revelation 19:5-8 and write your own prayer of praise based on the images these three passages portray.