



God's Word for this Week

The Feast of the Epiphany

6th January 2021

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God,
who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:
Mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith,
may at last behold your glory face to face;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE FIRST READING

Isaiah 60: 1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

² For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³ Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried
on their nurses' arms.

⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,*
because the abundance of the sea
shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

It's quite the Epiphany itself to suddenly realise the prophecies which foretold the coming of the Messiah as Old and New Testament are drawn together in the words of the Prophet Isaiah who describes the glory of the Lord as a light that shines on an otherwise darkened earth. The Prophecy even foretells the visit of travellers from distant lands bearing gifts!

This small piece of the second half of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah is worth prayerfully reading and re-reading in these darker times we witness at the present moment in our lives. As was then, God is ever-present and with his presence comes **HOPE**

THE EPISTLE READING

Ephesians 3: 1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for* Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— ²for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that



was given to me for you, ³and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵In former generations this mystery* was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. ⁸Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make everyone see* what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in* God who created all things; ¹⁰so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.*

For a brief time at the end of his second missionary journey, and then for more than two year on his third missionary journey, Paul ministered to the church in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21; 19:1-41). During his time in the city that housed the famous temple to the Greek Goddess Artemis, Paul saw many converted to faith in Jesus Christ and many others who opposed his preaching in the synagogues and homes. One prominent silversmith, Demetrius, who made implements for the worship of Artemis, found his business suffering greatly because people were converting to Christianity! The ensuing near-riot led Paul to leave the city, but only after the apostle had done much to stabilize and grow the Christian community there.

<https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-pauline-epistles/ephesians>

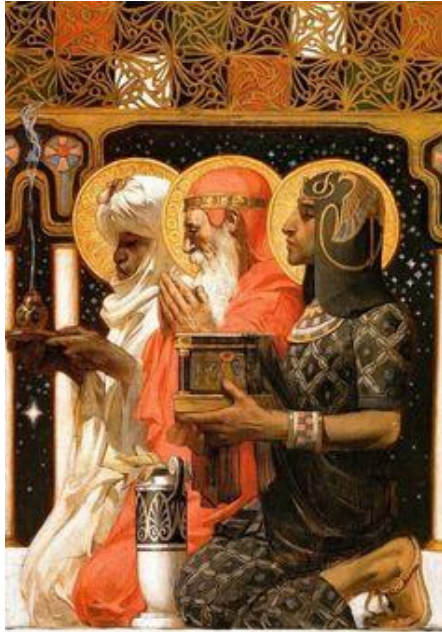
This encouraging piece of writing from the Letter to the Ephesians contains more than one mention of the word Grace. As we remember the travellers from the East who visited the infant child, we must consider that, alongside their own response to the draw to follow the strange heavenly light, was a God-given grace by which to find the courage to do so and the strength for the road.

This grace is still available to us in every moment of our lives today. All we need to do is become aware of it. Today may be just the opportunity to consider this grace first-hand and give thanks to God for his constant provision of same.

THE GOSPEL READING

Matthew 2: 1-12

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men* from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising,* and have come to pay him homage.' ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah* was to be born. ⁵They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:



⁶ "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd* my people Israel." '

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men* and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,* until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped,* they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid

him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

There is so much to say about the visit of the Magi at this point in our Scriptures for the year; their perception of the star in the first place which speaks of open and ready hearts might be a place to begin and their courage to respond by stepping forward upon a journey which could prove long and, at times, perilous. There is a progression from expectancy through the journey itself, an 'overwhelming joy' on the realisation that the star had stopped over one specific place and, no doubt their awe at the sight of a little child. The journey itself for them was far more than geographical miles! If we are to observe the progression of this small piece of scripture through the lives of these visitors, perhaps we can associate that same journey with our own journey of faith - the courage to hold fast and follow the draw of Christ in our lives; the risks that we can encounter along the way; not to mention the grace that is given in the first place. What is particularly interesting is that, having seen the child, these doubtless weary travellers find courage enough to go against one of the most formidable forces of power at that time – King Herod, by returning home to their own countries by a different route.

Are there times in your life where there are distinct decisions to be made as to whether to follow the powerful structures put in place in this world or choose the narrow gate and the less travelled way for the sake of the Christ child?