

Ripon and Lower Dales **Methodist Circuit**

Worship at Home

10.1.21

THE BIG REVEAL

Good morning, and welcome to worship on this the first Sunday in Epiphany. Lets begin our worship by saying these familiar words together.

Isaiah 60 v 1-6

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon
you.**

See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
**but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.**

Nations will come to your light,
**and kings to the brightness of your
dawn.**

Prayer

Almighty God
You sent your Son, the Word made flesh, to dwell with us, to share our Joys and our sufferings.

Accept us today as we offer our worship, our minds to learn from you, and our hearts to deepen our experience of you.

We thank you for your many blessings, for the blessing of family and friends and those who care for us.

We thank you for our homes and places of learning and employment.

Lord there have been times when we have fallen short of the example set before us. And so, for our failings in thought and deed, and our fumbling attempts to do good, We ask your forgiveness, trusting in your mercy and grace.

Open our minds to your wonderful ways.
Open our eyes to the truth of your Word.
Open our hearts to the reality of your presence.

In Jesus name we pray
Amen

Hymn

1 All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!

2 O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all!

3 Let every tongue and every tribe
responsive to his call,
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all.
To him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!

4 Oh, that with all the sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all

The big reveal

Let's pretend for a moment that we are playing a game of Cluedo.
We might have:- Colonel Mustard in the Ballroom with the candle stick;
The Reverend Green in the Dining room with the lead piping;
Or Miss Scarlet in the Library with Singing the Faith music edition.

It's time for -The big reveal - The climax of the who-done-it mystery, or detective novel. Sometimes the “big reveal” surprises us all by revealing bit player who hasn't featured very much in the story, or a character with hitherto unknown relevant facts or motives.

All very interesting you might say, but what has that got to do with us?

Wednesday (6th January) was Epiphany – one of those notable midweek days in the Church calendar. Epiphany means “manifestation or appearance”, It refers most commonly to the appearance of Christ into the world. We think especially of the Magi and at Epiphany we remember their visit to the Christ child.

Jesus is God’s Big Reveal.

Matthew’s Gospel 2 1-2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’

For the wise men, their Epiphany began before their visit. It began as it was revealed to them through a new star, that something momentous had happened, or was about to happen.

However, Epiphany as a season is about more than just the Wise Men. It includes the recognition of the Christ by Anna and Simeon in the Temple; Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist, The Transfiguration, and other significant events in the gospels that reveal who Jesus really is.

These moments of Epiphany were at the same time both “personal” and “public”. On a personal level it usually means a “striking realization”. They spoke to the recipient personally, but they were also meant for public revelation.

And as Jesus’ ministry grew, His person and his purpose was, in stages, revealed. When Jesus asked his disciples “but who do you say that I am”, and Peter answers “you are the Christ the son of the living God” – Jesus tells him that this was revealed to him not by man, but “by his Father in heaven”. An Epiphany moment.

And so the revelation continued to unfold – throughout His ministry, and through the

apostles, God’s purpose was made known. All by means of the Holy Spirit.

Paul writes Eph 3

⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.

Revelation today

George Fox, founder of the quakers, had a wonderful expression – that, as God spoke to him, a truth had been “**opened to him**”.

More-over, he had a great belief in the ability of the ordinary man and woman to receive revelation from God through the Spirit.

Truths were “opened” to George, (and not just to George, but to anyone who would receive), just as it was opened to the Magi that a new King had been born.

Just as it was opened to John the Baptist, and those present, that this Jesus was much more than just a wandering carpenter preacher when the Spirit descended like a dove and a voice was heard from heaven.

Just as it was opened to Simon Peter that Jesus was the Christ.

Just as it was opened to Peter, James and John on the mountain, of the Holiness of Jesus.

I love those little passages in the new testament where the writers give testimony to their experiences. Especially those instances where the light goes on. Personal revelations or Epiphanies. These are instances that stay with them throughout their lives.

In his first epistle referring to the transfiguration, Peter says:-

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honour and glory from God the

Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
¹⁸ **We ourselves heard this voice** that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

And John in His Gospel, perhaps even referring to the same incident, says:-
¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have **seen** his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Song StF 203

I had a dream that I was standing on a hillside;
 On a Christmas night so very long ago,
 When up in the air beautiful voices
 Sing a new song let everyone know.

Chorus:

*Oh and love shone down
 Over the hills and over the valleys
 Oh and love shone down
 Over the world*

When he spoke to me
 I knew it was an angel ,
 He said I think there's something
 that you ought to know,
 Then he just smiled said
 don't be afraid now
 Sing a new song let everyone know.

Chorus: Oh and love shone...

And then he told me all
 about the baby Jesus,
 Where to find him
 Where exactly where I should go
 Then he was join by millions of others Sing
 a new song let everyone know

Chorus: oh and love shone...

Was that a dream or was I really on that hillside?
 On that Christmas night so very long ago
 When he was born Jesus our saviour
 Sing a new song let everyone know

Chorus Oh and love shone...

Andy Piercy and CS deWhalley IQ music

And so - Our personal Epiphany is an "opening" to us of the Truth of the Gospel. It doesn't come about through knowledge, or reason, or emotion, but more importantly through the guidance, influence, inspiration and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian story is full of examples of Epiphany moments. John Wesley's diary entry for 24th May 1738 points to such a dawning as he says -
"I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."
 Note – "an assurance was given me".

An Epiphany moment can be a sudden realisation, or it can be a gradual dawning, but it needs to be pointed out that we need to be in the right place.

For me, an Epiphany moment might be a sudden realisation of a truth. It really is like a light bulb going on – just like the cartoons. And I might think "how did I not see that before?" But these things only happen when I am in the right frame of mind and create space, because in order to know what God is revealing, we need to be receptive.

When I was growing up, we had a succession of radios, or perhaps I should say "wirelesses", mostly driven by valves. They had Long wave, Medium wave and Short wave. Most fascinating for me was the Short Wave, with it's foreign stations and strange oscillating signals. However, as one wireless succeeded another, we lost short wave, and gained FM, we lost tuning knobs and we gained pre-set buttons for our favourite stations.

So here is an important question.

As Christians and as Churches are we content just to press our pre-set buttons? Or are we willing to adjust our tuning as we tune in to God.

If we are:-

We need to engage in "listening" prayer, or in other words to create space for God in our busy lives.

We need to have a quiet openness to the revelation of God - To see Christ for who he is.

We need to be available to God, for Him to open our hearts – personally - to the reality and the truth and the wonder of the Gospel, and what it means for us today to be part of that, living in his presence and sharing in his kingdom.

I am going to close with a few words from Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Ch1 ¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

A Prayer

Quiet our hearts Lord as we open ourselves to you.

Draw us into your presence.

Speak in the stillness.

Cast a revealing light into our minds.

Make real to us that eternal Hope. The hope heralded by the coming of the Christ child into this world.

Make real to us the revelation of your story. Immanuel – God with us.

Plant that understanding in our hearts so that we might know your more.

We pray for your world:-

For the lost and the lonely –

For the sad and the unsure –

For the hungry and the dispossessed –

For those suffering the consequences of the Covid pandemic through illness, separation, fear, frustration, anxiety.

Highlight to us where there are needs. Help us to be your hands and your feet wherever you have placed us.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

Now and forever

Amen

Song StF 451

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You

I want to see You.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You

I want to see You.

To see You high and lifted up

Shining in the light of Your glory

Pour out Your power and love

As we sing holy, holy, holy

Paul Baloché 1997 Integrity music

Blessing

StF 772

May the road rise up to meet you

May the wind be always at your back

May the sun shine warm upon your face

May the rain fall softly on your field.

And until we meet again may God hold you,

Until we meet again may God hold you,

Until we meet again may God hold you

In the hollow of his hands

Graham Pentelow 2021