

“Jesus Concealed – Jesus Revealed”

St. Matthew 2.1-12 & St. Mark 1.4-11

The Baptism of our Lord & The Epiphany of our Lord (Observed)
2006

The Word of God for our sermon meditation as we observe both the Epiphany of our Lord and the Baptism of our Lord was recorded for us in our Gospel readings for today.

During High School I had a friend who was a magician. He would put on some shows from time to time as well as show me and some others some of his tricks. There was one thing he was quite insistent about, however. He would never reveal the secret behind the tricks he performed. It is a rule of the trade – a magician is never to reveal a secret concealed concerning the performance of any illusion and slight of hand. Though one can buy card tricks and learn some basic illusions, the behind-the-scenes of a major magical act is never to be shared.

Though this is true in the world of magical illusion and entertainment, it is not to be true in the life of the Christian Church. Our Lord Jesus who once was concealed for a time was meant to be revealed to all people for their salvation. This is true, for instance, with both the Magi and John the Baptist. Though they both knew some things about Jesus, the ancient prophecies concerning His advent and the star, of the descending of the Holy Spirit on Jesus in the form of a dove, Jesus still had to be revealed to them.

The Magi having made their trek along the wilderness highway still have to ask for directions when they arrive in Jerusalem. Yes, they knew that a star would be associated with the arrival of the Messiah, the King of the Jews born to Israel. However, His location was still concealed to them until the Lord revealed it when the priests and scribes read from the Book of Micah that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem of Judea. In the end, the prophecy and the star revealed the location of the King of the Jews. Jesus, though concealed, was meant to be revealed.

The same is true in connection with John the Baptist and Jesus' inauguration into His Public Ministry. From the other Gospel accounts we learn that the Lord revealed to John who Jesus was even though John and Jesus were cousins. John the Baptist, though he was the predicted forerunner of the Messiah, of our Lord Jesus, still needed more enlightenment from the Lord in

order to identify and know that Jesus is the Son of the Heavenly Father in the flesh.

Both the Magi and John the Baptist had to have Him who was concealed revealed to them so that they might reveal Him to others in their lives. Though the Scriptures are silent, it would seem a safe assumption that the Magi told others whom they met on their return home and in their home country about the King of the Jews and all that had happened to them much like the shepherds did on the night of Jesus' birth. John the Baptist continued to preach and point others to Jesus, the Lamb of God, including his own disciples so that Jesus could be revealed as the Savior of the nations to all people.

We were as they once were. Jesus was once concealed to us until the light of His saving name was shown on us in our baptisms. For the Scriptures teach that all people are spiritually lifeless and dead, in the dark, so to speak, when it comes to God and His salvation. Sin is described as darkness and we remain in that darkness so long as we remain in that sin. It is like the scales that covered St. Paul's eyes when blinded on the road to Damascus. There is nothing that you and I can do to remove that darkness and see the light.

But in His love and mercy for us and all people, God has had the light of His Son shown on us when we were washed and cleansed in the waters of Holy Baptism. At that time we who were lifeless were made alive by God's grace. We who were blinded were made to see. We who were lost were found. We who were dead in sin were made alive through faith in the Living One. We who once were in ignorance have seen a great light and have been saved through faith in the name of Jesus.

As such, just like the Magi and John the Baptist, we are to continue to reveal Jesus to those for whom He is concealed, who do not know Him and believe on Him for their salvation. Each of us is, essentially, a link in the chain of those who are to reveal Jesus to the nations as Savior and King of all. This is, in all honesty, why we are here as a congregation and here as members of St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church in New Boston. We have been brought here by God to this time and this place, links in

the chain, to reveal Jesus to all, members and non-members alike.

We have heard this message time and time again. We all grow uncomfortable and start to squirm inwardly and perhaps outwardly whenever we hear that it is part of our Christian living to share the Savior with others regardless of our fears, uncertainties, and doubts of our abilities and skills to do so. It is part of our Christian duty to our Lord Jesus to share Him and reveal Him to all people that they might believe on Him for their salvation.

Yet, how many of us can honestly say that we do this in our lives? I challenged you earlier last month to take the opportunity, during what should be the easiest time of the year, to talk about Jesus with others. How did you do? Well, come on, you might say. Take it easy Pastor. After all, I had some other issues I had to work out. So, you think that might fly before God? Go ahead, tell Your Savior that because you didn't trust Him to give you the words you didn't tell anyone about Him this Christmas. I'm sure He will be pleased to hear that.

It's not going to work is it? Are we not, as St. Paul says in our Epistle reading, having died to sin no longer live in sin? So why do we keep on trying to excuse our sin in this area when we know it is our fault and no one else's? We do this, not just with this sin in our lives but with every sin because we know it is not pleasing to God. We know that this is not how He would have us live as those called out of the darkness of sin into His marvelous light of salvation. We try to disguise, pull a slight of hand, and conceal our sins of omission and sins of commission because we know they are transgressions and trespasses against God's will. We know they are and we are trying to distance ourselves from them as much as possible – but it doesn't work. Clever as we might be we cannot distract God from seeing our sins for all things, even the corner recesses of our hearts are revealed in His sight.

Though we are certainly in a hopeless state in our sin, in the darkness of our transgressions, the Epiphany of our Lord as well as His Baptism reveal to us that Jesus has come for the salvation of all people, yes, even sinners like you and me. Revealed in prophecy and finally in time to the shepherds, the Magi, the Jews, John the Baptist, and more Jesus came to deliver us from the

darkness of sin and hell and to deliver us to the never-ending light of heaven.

Though born at night, Jesus, the Light of the world, came to dispel the dark and foreboding grip that sin has on all people. He came as the Light of the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel to remove the pall of sin and to clothe us in His righteousness. Entering into this dark world of iniquity, Jesus took on Himself the iniquity of us all. He endured the darkness of God's judgment and of hell on the cross so that we may be delivered from it through faith in His name.

Rising the third day as the Son of Righteousness, Jesus has been revealed to the nations as the Savior of all, the King of the Jews to be worshiped and adored by Jew and Gentile alike. He has been revealed to us so that we by faith in His name may have peace and pardon in His name and, enlightened by His saving Name, we have been made pleasing to His Father on high so that we are called the blessed of His Father.

As such, as those who have been enlightened by His saving name, who have been brought to faith and are now alive to God, we are to reveal Him with gladness as did the Magi and John the Baptist all those years ago. Until He returns we are to share Him with those for whom His name and salvation are still concealed that they too may become as are we – the enlightened of God through faith and those who look with joy to the final revealing of our God.

We should do this with our own just as surely as the Magi and John the Baptist did in their day. Gentile to Gentiles, Jew to Jews, Jesus was revealed and hearts were enlightened and people were given the salvation of God through faith. So are we to do the same, especially with our fellow members here at St. Paul's. You may have noticed that our attendance has been lackluster as of late, even during the Christmas Season. You, perhaps like me, may be wondering how can we change that and have our attendance improve?

Perhaps it is time for us who are a bit inconsistent in our worship to be more consistent by worshiping every week instead of a few times a month. Perhaps it is time that those who are faithful in our worship and adoration of Christ to reveal Him again to our fellow

members who are not so faithful. Perhaps it is time for us who are glad that Jesus has been revealed to us for the salvation of our souls to reach out and bring with us someone who does not know the Lord. Perhaps it is time for us to do what God has put us here at St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church to do – reveal Jesus to those to whom He is concealed.

For they will not come to know Him any other way. Let's challenge ourselves at the start of this year – it's still early enough – to invite a fellow member who hasn't been to worship in a while or someone unchurched. Let's see if by God's grace we can raise our attendance by 10%, 15 people a week in the next 6 months. Will you join me in doing this since we, for whom Jesus was once concealed, have had Jesus and His salvation revealed to us for the forgiveness of our sins and for the joy of eternal life? God grant us such hearts to the glory of His name. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+