

Epiphany

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by **Greg Alms**

Don't miss the season of Epiphany! Epiphany is season of light but is squeezed between Christmas and Lent. The message of this season ought to shine brightly for it teaches an important topic: the mission of the church. It progresses from bright star guiding the Magi to the shining dove at the Baptism of Jesus to the glory of the Transfiguration. The structure of the season proclaims the mission of God's people.

The story of the Magi is that of distant people coming to Christ. The light draws the wise men from far off to worship Him. The Church calls people who are isolated from God to come. But the invitation is not to some idea or theory

but to "God in man made manifest" (*LSB* 394). The Church's mission is to call sinners to communion with the life-giving flesh of Christ.

The first Sunday after the Epiphany takes us to the waters of the Jordan. There John baptized Jesus, who numbers Himself among sinners. The bright dove, the Holy Spirit, points out Christ in the water. Outreach to the world and into the Church points to the same water. Those whom the mission calls to join Christ and His Church are called to the light of Christ in Baptism.

The remaining Sundays of Epiphany focus on the ministry of Jesus. He is the light of the world. He preaches. He prays. He heals those afflicted by Satan. In other words, He does mission work. The Church does also. Jesus also calls us the light of the world. The mission of the Church is like Jesus' ministry: long and patient. The Church's mission is not to simply bring in as many as we can through the front door. It is to keep shining the light of Christ through His word, season after season, so that those living in darkness may continue to see the great light.

The finale of the Epiphany season is the Transfiguration. God in flesh is at the center but now not Magi but the glorified saints of old and the trembling disciples surround Christ. The light that pointed to Jesus at His Baptism now shines through Him. This is the goal of the Church's work: to bring people into God's presence for eternity. The light of Transfiguration shows us how important the Church's work really is. The mission of the Church is aimed at that divine joy.

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