



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Epiphany (A) January 6, 2026

RCL: Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; **Ephesians 3:1-12**; Matthew 2:1-12

Opening Prayer |

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Context |

It is likely that the Letter to the Ephesians was written by a student or follower of the Apostle Paul. Ephesians is an epistle about what it means to be followers of Christ. At the time of its writing the church was growing, and questions were arising about how people were to be in relationship with God and one another, and how Christ informs and changes the ways in which his followers are to live and act.

In the early church there was a great deal of conversation and debate about who could be a part of the church, and what was necessary for someone to be considered a true and full follower of Christ. For example, think about the many instances in the New Testament when authors—and particularly the Apostle Paul—write about circumcision: its importance or lack thereof. People were not sure if, in order to be a Christian, one needed to first be a Jew.

The author of Ephesians is firm in insisting that Christ came into the world for the benefit of all people. Because of this assurance, the implications of how followers of Jesus are called to be in relationship with one another apply not only to Christ-following Jews, but also to Gentiles, those people who had not previously been in covenant relationship with God.

The lectionary text, Ephesians 3:1-12, falls on the feast of the Epiphany. Every year, Epiphany is on January 6th and it marks the arrival of the wise men. Many churches have nativity scenes, which will be missing the figures of the wise men until Epiphany. The arrival of the wise men from the East serves as the first example of how Christ has come for all people regardless of their country of origin. God is doing a new thing in the Incarnation, and it impacts all humanity's relationship to God. As the Letter to the Ephesians puts it, "the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6).

Theological Reflection |

The vision of the church that is offered in the Letter to the Ephesians is expansive and exciting! This letter makes clear the wideness of God's work in the world through Christ. This passage from chapter three is right in the middle of the letter. It brings the reader into the heart of the letter's message of good news and makes it possible to imagine oneself as a full participant and stake holder in the work that Christ does in the world.

In 3:12, the author of Ephesians speaks of "Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him" (Ephesians 3:11-12). Reading this passage in the context of Epiphany has truly beautiful and revelatory implications. Through Jesus Christ, God makes Godself known and accessible to all people. God reveals Godself to all people. Just as God in Christ was revealed to the wise men, so Christ continues to be revealed today. Through Christ, God becomes available to all people, regardless of history or origin.

The coming of Christ is the ultimate example of God reaching toward humanity in grace, even as humanity in arrogance refuses to reach toward God. Nevertheless, God chooses humanity over and over again. God reached out through Christ two thousand years ago in a stable in Bethlehem, making Godself known to the shepherds and wise men alike. God continues to reach out through Christ in the work of Christ's Body, the Church, and through the sacraments, particularly baptism and the Eucharist.

In baptism, Christians are initiated into Christ Body through water and the Holy Spirit (Book of Common Prayer 298). Through baptism, Christians are able to share fully in Christ's death and resurrection. In the Eucharist, Christ is made known through simple bread and wine in which Jesus is really present by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In verse three of today's passage the author writes of "the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:3). Consider the audacious truth of the fact that, in the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood at the Eucharist, followers of Christ are able to share fully in the mystery of Christ made tangible through the grace and love of God for all people.

It is fitting that the author of Ephesians writes in terms of "access to God in boldness and confidence" (Ephesians 3:12). Appreciating the boldness of human familiarity with God through the person of Jesus requires some reflection on the complete transcendent otherness of God. Yes, human beings are created in God's image, but by nature, God is distinct from human beings. Creator not creature, God is outside of space and time, an artist whose medium is stars and whose canvas is infinite sky. It is that God who chooses out of pure love to become fully human in Christ, pouring what is infinite into a finite being and existence. It is that God who reveals themselves to all people out of love. And it is through the grace of that God that human beings are called into new relationship with God and one another through Christ. It is in this context that the letter to the Ephesians seeks to articulate the practicalities of that new relationship.

Reflection Questions |

- When have you experienced God revealing Godself to you?
- Are there people in your life in whom you see God revealed?
- How might Christ be calling you to live differently to better reflect your relationship with him and other people?

- What are three actionable steps you can take to strengthen your relationship with Christ and others?
- How can you take an active role in making Christ present in the world as a member of the church?

Faith in Practice |

This week find a way to make Christ present to those in your life. This can be as simple as writing a note to a friend, dropping off canned goods at your local blessing box or food bank, or being intentionally present and kind to those with whom you find yourself in proximity. You might want to take some time to reflect further and possibly journal on today's reflection questions. Seek to find the revelation of Christ in the people around you.

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