

**“EPIPHANY SUNDAY”**  
**“Seeking God”**

The New Year has begun and we have come to the end of the 12 days of Christmas. We are also in the second month of our *“Year of Gratitude.”* January’s focus for our gratitude challenge is *“good things.”* This month tends to be a time of *“new life”* and new challenges and resolutions, hence our challenge on good things. We will continue to write a thank you note each week and find a new way to live out our gratitude. Today in worship we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany which commemorates the visitation of the Magi, the Wise Men. Many of us have already put up our Christmas decorations but the church calendar has twelve full days of Christmas beginning on December 25th and continuing until Epiphany. Epiphany celebrates God’s presence in our world in the tiny infant Jesus. Once we encounter the Divine in Jesus, we can never be the same; we are changed and are forever different. May your encounter with Jesus this week fill you with grace and Light. --- Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Seeking God”**

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*Gracious God, you have called us to a pilgrimage of faith. The light of your truth summons us. The call of faith is a constant challenge on our journey. We give thanks for the desire to seek you: We give thanks for voices from the past that offer guidance; signposts pointing to the next stage... For the conviction that, unseen but not unknown, you are with us. Keep us faithful to the vision and steadfast on our journey. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen (adapted from an ancient Welsh prayer)*

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## Study Guide

### **Monday, January 7, 2019 Matthew 2: 1-12**

Yesterday we celebrated Epiphany, the twelfth day of Christmas which honors the visitation of the Magi. Today, some of the older Orthodox Churches celebrate Christmas (Long story short, this has to do with the old Julian calendar before it changed in the middle ages.) The magi were travelers, foreigners, pagans and they came seeking the “king of the Jews.” This was one of the three most important feast days of the church after Easter and Pentecost. Why? This celebration focuses on the light reaching out to ALL people EVERYWHERE. Christmas focuses on God’s self-giving gift in Jesus, but Epiphany is about outreach, grace and evangelism. Evangelism can be a word that is disconcerting, but it just means sharing Good News. The magi were willing to travel maybe up to two years to seek this gift of God in Jesus. *How far are you willing to travel, and what kind of time are you willing to give to seek out Jesus? How much are you willing to share with others, the good news and grace you have received from this holy child, Jesus?*

### **Tuesday, January 8, 2019 Matthew 2: 1-2, Isaiah 60: 1-4**

Both of these passages speak of following the “light” or the “star.” To have a guide one usually has someone that knows the way, the guide needs to be knowledgeable, about the direction, the terrain, the seasons of the year and the group he or she is guiding. The Magi had no such guide, they had star or a pattern of stars and Isaiah says that people will follow the light and come to God. In our life, I would guess we would want a guide, a shepherd who knows us, who understands us, who will lead us in ways that are helpful, good, joyful and will lead us to the place where we find meaning and hope. In our celebration of Epiphany and Christmas we celebrate Jesus as our guide. *How do you experience God’s presence and light in your life? List one or two ways you intend to let Christ guide you in this New Year.*

### **Wednesday, January 9, 2019 Isaiah 60:4-6**

This joyous occasion is one in which “all” will gather and “you shall see and be radiant: your heart shall thrill and rejoice.” This passage is read for Epiphany because of the mention of gold and frankincense and the camels which is why so many nativity scenes have them. Israel was challenged to be a “light” to the nations. The people of Israel often failed and did not point to God by their words, actions or behavior. We, too, often fail. Like the church over hundreds of years, people still are working on being a place where “all” shall come and see the Light and the love and grace of God. The prophet doesn’t promise perfection or that nothing evil or bad will happen, just that there is light and love. *How are you radiant in the midst of life? How will your life show your gratitude for the light of God and your love of God?*

### **Thursday, January 10, 2019 John 1: 1-5**

This passage of John is tied into Genesis 1 and is often part of the Epiphany readings (was used in worship the Sunday after Christmas.) John’s preamble invites the reader to understand that Jesus is not separate from God, but is one with God as well as one with humanity. All of John is focused on the truth of incarnation: Jesus as Emmanuel, God with us. Unpacking this passage is not easy and yet it is certainly a favorite for many. In Christ, people see life and light and no matter how much darkness is around, “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” *In this season of Light, how do you experience that Light in the midst of darkness?*

### **Friday, January 11, 2019 John 1: 14, 16**

The first verses of John speak of the “Word” being one with God and being God. These verses remind us that the “Word” is also fully human. It is one of the mysteries of the Christian faith that believers embrace the understanding that Jesus was “fully God and fully human.” God was willing to give up being infinite and all-knowing to become finite and human. From this, John writes, “we have all received grace upon grace.” In Jesus, not only does God identify with us, but invites us into a deeper relationship. Our next sermon series begins Sunday and we will explore over the next few weeks what it looks like to have a Courageous Faith. We will use a study of the Lord’s Prayer to deepen our faith and relationship with God. *As part of a Year of Gratitude and our focus on Good Things this month, join us in worship as we ponder the good things we receive from God through the gift of the Lord’s Prayer.*