



All-Age worship - Epiphany Sunday 3rd January

PREPARATION

All Lord Jesus, the wise men followed a star
to come and worship you.
As we offer you the gift of our worship,
may we meet with you this morning.
Amen



Carol – 740 We three kings

We three kings of orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain
Moor and mountain
Following yonder star

*O star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still
proceeding
Guide us to thy perfect light*

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King for ever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign

O star of wonder...

Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship Him, God most high

O star of wonder...

Myrrh is mine
Its bitter perfume breathes
A life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone cold tomb

O star of wonder...

Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and Sacrifice!
Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia
Earth to heaven replies

O star of wonder...

Confession

Lord Jesus, the wise men followed the star to find you.
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.
Lord have mercy.

All Lord have mercy.

You were born a Jew to reconcile all people,
Forgive our suspicion of different nations and races.
Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

The wise men offered you their most precious gifts.

Forgive our greed and selfishness.

Lord have mercy.

All Lord have mercy.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring *us* his pardon and peace, now and for ever.

All Amen.

Opening activity – Hazelnut's Christmas

Carol – 337 **In the bleak midwinter**

In the bleak midwinter
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign;
In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God incarnate,
Jesus Christ.

Enough for him, whom Cherubim
Worship night and day
A breast full of milk
And a manger full of hay.

Enough for him, whom angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But his mother only,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
I would do my part,
Yet what I can I give Him —
Give my heart.

WORD

Matthew 2:1-12 – Arnold & friends

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶" 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.' "

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Ephesians 3:1-12 – Anthony Morton

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

²Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Talk – Epiphany – Riches in Christ – Jonathan Thomas

So, did Santa get you what was top of your list for Christmas?

My side of our family always do a secret Santa as there are quite a few of us and saves us buying loads of presents, spending a lot of money and ending up mostly with stuff we don't really want. It's secret only because we don't know who bought it for us, but we make suggestions as to what we want, so what turns up (if it gets delivered on time by the postal service) is not really a secret. My present this year were these lovely slippers, fur-lined and cushioned, more than I had hoped for. How sad am I to get excited by these!



But what if the present that was top of your list was the latest iPad or a voucher for a holiday to the Caribbean (once we can travel abroad again!) and when you opened it you looked at it excitedly and then just left it in its box? That would be crazy wouldn't it?



And yet that is exactly what many Christians do with the riches that God has given us in Christ that Paul talks about in Eph 3:8. He longs that the Gentiles would know “the boundless riches of Christ”, the mystery that was revealed to him by Jesus on the road to Damascus. The magi, wise men, who we think about today at Epiphany were Gentiles to whom God revealed the mystery of Jesus through a new star appearing in the sky that led these astrologers to travel many miles to search out and eventually find a new king. The presents they gave showed they knew something of the type of king he would become and therefore what riches he would offer. Gold represented Jesus' kingship, ruler over a new type of kingdom; frankincense represented his priestly nature, someone who would mediate between humans and God; and myrrh represented the significance of Jesus' death.

The word epiphany means a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization, usually of something significant and lifechanging. And my prayer today as we start this new year is that we can discover afresh or for the first time these “boundless riches in Christ”. But before we explore them further let’s think about how riches are acquired. There are three main ways:

1. Riches can be earned. Some people work incredibly hard, take risks, have specific skills that society values and pays them handsomely for and put them to good use and become successful and rich.
2. Riches can be given, or won. Someone likes you and gives you a lot of money or you get lucky and win the lottery. You haven’t really done much to deserve it except maybe be likeable or buy a lottery ticket, but you get rich.
3. Riches can be inherited. You happen to be born in to a wealthy family and because of the fact that you are part of that family at a given time, when you reach a certain age or when someone dies you inherit their riches. You have done nothing to deserve it, but the riches are there to be passed down and enjoyed.

The riches in Christ cannot be earned. No matter how holy we are, how kind we are to others, how hard we work at being a Christian we can’t earn them by right. And the riches in Christ aren’t given to us randomly or acquired by good luck depending on fate or divine whims. No, they are an inheritance God gives to his heirs and, as v6 says, they are all his children, Jews and Gentiles alike. There is no qualification by birth or race, only through accepting the gospel where all who believe are adopted into God’s family as his children and share together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Peter says of God in 1 Peter 1:3-4: “In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” In other words these riches are a right we have as God’s children if we have this new birth by accepting Christ as our saviour. An inheritance nobody can take away. However, as I indicated earlier, although we have them, like any inheritance they are only of benefit if we discover them and make use of them.

What are these riches? Well they are many and part of the joy is discovering them for ourselves as we explore the depths of life in Jesus. Central among these treasures is free and confident access to God himself as v12 indicates. Because we are his children we have access to our heavenly Father at all times through prayer. There is no magic password to come into his presence, no special clothes to wear, no specific place and

no appointed time when we have to come to him. We are welcome into his presence any time, whatever state we are in, however good, or otherwise, we think we have been, however much we think we deserve to come before the creator of the universe. Jesus' birth, life and ultimately death opened the door of the heavenly throne-room itself to us. And it reveals not an angry God or a changeable God who may be kind one day and terrifying the next, like many of the gods in Roman times and even in religions today who have to be appeased. But rather a loving father who welcomes us all as his beloved children. That's amazing isn't it? Hopefully we all know it and take advantage of it, not just dipping our toe in the water of such amazing access, but discover the deepest, most fulfilling relationship we can have with anyone.

Other riches include the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God's presence within us to comfort, guide and empower us. They include the riches of God's word which inspires us, teaches us, encourages us and directs us. They include being part of God's diverse earthly family of all ages, backgrounds, races and cultures who aspire to love, accept and support each other despite our differences. And these riches include the promise of eternal life with Christ in his perfect kingdom.

And there's more, all there for us to explore. So two questions for us to finish with?

1. As I put to us at the start, are we exploring these riches in Christ in their fulness or leaving them like an unused present. Or taking the analogy of a holiday, do we book a holiday, take the flight to the Caribbean, check in at the hotel and then stay in our room the whole time. Out there is a wonderful pool, beautiful beaches, great food, boat trips round the islands etc, but despite the cost of getting there, the promises of great things to see and do in the brochure we choose to go no further than our hotel room. And when we fly home we wonder what we missed. Wouldn't it be sad at the end of our lives to say we knew there was more to Jesus, but we never had the courage or were too lazy or too wrapped up in this world to discover those riches for ourselves?
2. Are our lives and the lives of our churches reflecting to others, both within and outside the church, the richness of being in Christ? Do we talk about what we have discovered in knowing Jesus, mentor younger generations, live out being a diverse family of grace and joy, accepting all, disagreeing well and being united in love?

These are big challenges for us to start 2021 with, but I believe are vital for us if we are to grow as individuals and as a church in what will

continue to be a challenging year. So make them a priority this year and enjoy new riches in Christ you have never discovered. **AMEN**

Song – 951 To be in your presence

To be in your presence

To sit at your feet

When your love surrounds me

And makes me complete

This is my desire, O Lord

This is my desire

This is my desire, O Lord

This is my desire

To rest in your presence

Not rushing away

To cherish each moment

Here I would stay

This is my desire...

All Let us bless the living God:

He was born of the Virgin Mary,

revealed in his glory, worshipped by the angels,

proclaimed among the nations,

believed in throughout the world,

exalted to the highest heavens.

Blessed be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever.

Amen.

This time at home – The Cadet de Fontenays

Intercessions – Jenny Jones

Over Christmas, we get to give lots of Christmas presents to our friends and family, and hopefully you all received some lovely presents too. As we celebrate Epiphany today, we remember the gifts that Jesus received of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. And in our prayers, we're also going to think about the gifts that we have been given by God. Dear God, thank you for your creation. Thank you that you have created this world full of plants and animals and colours and wind and rain and snow and rivers and fields and mountains and oceans. Thank you that your creation supports us – that it helps us to eat, that it provides us with medicines and sports and adventures and beautiful art. Help us to look after this gift that you have given us, to protect it from harm and care for it well. **Amen.**



Dear God, thank you for our friends and family. Thank you for all the people who love us and care for us. Thank you for the teachers who teach us, the doctors and nurses who care for us when we are ill, for the police and others who work to keep us safe. Thank you for the people who lead us, locally and nationally. We pray for all of these people, that you will be

with them. Help us to care for those around us well. We particularly pray for Peter and Eileen Bliss, Patrick Chapman, Enid Hardman, John Hunter, Lynda Kirk, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park, Joy Storkey, Alison Cole and Barbara Thirst. **Amen.**

Dear God, thank you that we are able to gather together to worship you, both in person and online. Thank you that we are part of a community of Christians all across the world. We pray for all those who are unable to worship publicly, due to fear of persecution or imprisonment. Be with all of these people, protect them from harm, and help them to continue sharing your good news. **Amen.**

Dear God, thank you that Jesus came to Earth as a baby to live alongside us, to live on Earth, teaching, healing, baptising. Thank you that the one who came as a baby, took on our sins and died to save us. Thank you that because of him, we are able to live in relationship with you, here and in Heaven. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**All 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.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen**

CONCLUSION

Song – Blessed be your name

Blessed Be Your Name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance
flow
Blessed be Your name
Blessed Be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the
wilderness
Blessed Be Your name
*Every blessing You pour out, I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in, Lord
Still I will say*

*Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name*
Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on
me
When the world's 'all as it should
be'
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name

Every blessing...

You give and take away
You give and take away

My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be Your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord....

All In darkness and in light,
in trouble and in joy,
help us, heavenly Father,
to trust your love,
to serve your purpose,
and to praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star to find the Christ,
the Light from Light, lead us in our pilgrimage to find the Lord.
and transform our lives to bring his light to others.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Be with us and remain with us always.

All Amen

