

Rosewood, Marburg, Lowood, Hiddenvale

**THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD
3RD JANUARY 2021
ST LUKE'S ROSEWOOD
9AM**

Isaiah 60.1-6
Psalm 72.1-7,10-14 (APBA 294)
Ephesians 3.1-12
Matthew 2.1-12

Arise, shine; for your light has
come, and the glory of the
Lord has risen upon you.

Isaiah 60.1



Lord God of the nations,
we have seen the star of your glory rising in splendour:
may the brightness of your incarnate Word pierce the night
that covers the earth,
signal the dawn of justice and peace,
and beckon all nations to walk as one in your light.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, in the
splendour of eternal light, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Priest in Charge -Reverend Louise Orpe Phone 07 5464 2797
Office Email: rosewood@anglicanchurchsq.org.au
Giving: Envelopes are available at each centre. To deposit offerings:
Anglican Parish of Rosewood BSB 704 901 A/c 00008030

Upcoming Sunday Services in the Parish:

Please register for services on: **07 5464 2797**

10th January

9am All Saints' Marburg—Rev'd Rex

17th January

9am Morning Prayer St Luke's Rosewood
10.30am St Anne's Hiddenvale—Rev'd Louise

24th January

9am St James' Lowood—Rev'd Louise

31st January

9am St Luke's Rosewood—Rev'd Louise

Daily Readings for the coming week:

Mon: 1 John 3.7-10; Psalm 98.1-7; John 1.35-42

Tue: 1 John 3.11-12; Psalm 100; John 1.43-51

Wed: 1 John 4.11-18; Psalm 72.8-14; Mark 6.45-52

Thu: 1 John 4.19-5.4; Psalm 72.15-19; Luke 4.14-22

Fri: 1 John 5.5-13; Psalm 147.12-20; Luke 5.12-16

Sat: 1 John 5.14-21; Psalm 149.1-5; John 3.22-30

Sun: Genesis 1.1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19.1-7; Mark 1.4-11



Notices:

• A reminder that midweek services, Bible study, and Prayer & Praise will be in recess through January.

• The Parish Guild will **not** have a meeting in January, the next meeting will be at 9.30am 2nd of February in All Saints' Marburg Hall. New members are welcome.

Pray for those in need:

We give thanks for prayers answered and ask for continued prayers for:

Norm, Julie and family. Lynn. Kim and family. Carin and family, Carmel, Kristy and family. Glenda and family, Mary and Peter. Kevin and Lynn, Benjamin and Tiffany Hanel. Jan, Anita and Gordon. Robyn. Paul, Ann Perkins, Sylvia. Bill Mears.

Pray for those whose need is ongoing:

Ian, Brenda and David, May, Judy and Adrian. Mark, Graham and family, Wilma, Ron. Irene and Michael.

ROSEWOOD ANGLICAN PARISH
(Insert to) EPIPHANY NEWSLETTER
3 January 2020

Scripture Readings

A reading from Isaiah, chapter 60, beginning at the 1st verse

1 “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

4 “Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Psalm 72.1-7, 10-14

1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

5 May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

7 In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

12 For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

13 He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

A reading from Ephesians, chapter 3, beginning at the 1st verse

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This 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.

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

10 His 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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The gospel according to St Matthew, chapter 2, beginning at verse 1

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

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ‘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 shepherd my people Israel.’”

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and

the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On 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, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

For the gospel of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Sermon prepared by Rev'd Rex for Epiphany Sunday (Readings per pages 1 to 3)

Today we celebrate ***the Epiphany of Jesus***. *Epiphany* as an expression was first applied by the 6th century Church to today's account from Matthew's gospel about the first revelation of Jesus to *pagan*, or *Gentile* people. *Epiphany* means ***sudden revelation and has been defined as the moment when you suddenly feel you understand, or become conscious of, something that is very important to you and often occurs as a powerful religious experience.***

For hundreds of years – the Jews, often under persecution and oppression, had been told by their prophets that God would reveal Himself in a new way to them – and to the whole world – He would send a Messiah – a *special saviour*. About 500 years before Christ was born, one of *their* wise men – the prophet Daniel, after being taken into exile was, because of his special wisdom, appointed by the king of Babylon to instruct *that nation's wise men*.

Daniel's instruction very likely would have included Hebrew belief in a coming Messiah; belief which would have been passed on to generations of magi that followed. This is the best explanation we have for Matthew's record centuries later of the visit to the infant Jesus of wise men, or magi, from a Gentile nation *east of Israel!* Matthew also tells of a star sent by God to guide the magi to the new-born Jesus – who would be the key to God's plan for salvation of the whole world.

Newspapers and popular magazines today devote many column inches of horoscopes to guidance by different stars– but God used only one star to direct His preferred future of all mankind. But was it *a* star?

Three possible explanations are mooted.

1. A few years before Jesus' birth, Halley's comet, with its blazing tail, was reported to be active, which may have stirred the magi's interest in heavenly help.
2. Around the time of the birth, Chinese and Korean records report **a supernova** that left a trail of light in the sky long enough to guide the wise men's journey.
3. Then they may have seen a **conjunction of two planets** such as happened recently in our own skies – again such was mentioned in contemporary reports from around the time.

While any of these explanations is feasible – what stands out for us is Matthew's claim that the star **stopped over the place where [Jesus] was**. Because a star stopping is not astronomically plausible, some claim Matthew invented the star bit to add significance to Jesus' birth and to confirm that it fulfils certain OT prophecy. But if Matthew was into *invention*, would he have invented **Gentile astrologers** to seek and worship **Israel's** messiah?

I believe Matthew is presenting historical truth and what those wise men followed was *a miracle* – certainly not beyond the God who created the galaxies! Whatever its actual form - supernova, comet, or a planetary conjunction, our magi saw and followed a great light, a star of *wonder*, which helped guide them—and us—to the perfect light that is Jesus.

Five other matters speak to us from Matthew's account?

1. The first is that Jesus' coming fulfilled Hebrew prophecy. How then did Gentile magi know that a star would announce the arrival of this *Messiah King* in Israel? I addressed this before. The exiled Jew Daniel was appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar as head of all magi in Persia five centuries before and it is not unreasonable to conclude that detail from our reading today from the prophet Isaiah was included in Daniel's teaching.

As possibly also was Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24.17 telling of *a star coming up out of Jacob*. Also because Daniel was aware of the timing of the Messiah's coming, we can assume there was a heightened expectation among some, even many, Persian magi of Jesus' day. However they came to this knowledge, our magi stepped out in faith when they spotted a very unique star in a darkened sky.

2. The second matter we learn from our gospel passage is **Jesus came to save sinners**. The magi were not only Gentiles; they were Gentiles of a regime oppressive of God's people and who today we might identify as sorcerers or wizards and into whose dark and superstitious background, Jesus' star shone with knowledge of Him as Saviour. At the end of Matthew Jesus emphasises the universal reach of His Gospel by commissioning the Apostles to make disciples *of all nations* - demonstrating the gospel's geographic and moral reach in drawing Gentiles to Christ – which commenced with the magi!

Faith, first demonstrated in their response to a star in Persia, and evident when they asked for directions in Jerusalem; was focused and fixed on Christ by the time they reached Bethlehem. Even as an infant, Jesus saved sinners from all over – just as He does today!

3. The third lesson we learn from Matthew's passage is that Jesus' presence *gladdens the heart* – we can assume the first time they saw the star in the east, the magi's hearts would have leapt with joy.

But by the time they get to Jerusalem, the star had disappeared and they had to rely *by faith* on enquiries and follow general directions that they received. Faith vindicated when the star reappeared once they were on the road from Jerusalem and stopped over Bethlehem; where we read in the **NKJV**, *They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. Not they rejoiced, or they rejoiced with great joy – they rejoiced with **exceedingly** great joy.*

Joy that grew in anticipation at every step until the star settled over the child – we can only imagine the extent of their jubilation when they reached their destination and their eyes settled on the star-lit child? The more our eyes rest upon Christ by faith, the more joy will fill our hearts also – not the temporary, frivolous, hilarity the world offers, but deep, increasing joy of knowing the Son of God – the saviour of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. A fourth lesson we can learn from this gospel account is that *Jesus humbles the wise*. The magi were part of the Persian elite – renowned for magical wisdom and political power. Kingmakers of their day, they were used to having both high and low bowing to them and seeking their favour. But when they *saw the child Jesus*, we read, *these magi cast themselves to the ground and worshipped*, a word the Bible reserves only for honour given to God!

Imagine the scene – learned, wealthy, powerful men worshipping a peasant's baby. They had not heard Him teach, they had not seen him give sight to the blind or walk on water as many would 30 years later; yet by faith they worship the God they see in baby's clothes. By faith, these men of status unashamedly declare to the child, *You are high, and we are low - You are King and we are your servants.*

Biblical scholar J.C. Ryle comments on this event, *We read of no greater faith than this in the whole Bible!*

5. The final thing we learn from wise men following a star is this; *Jesus opens wallets*. After they had opened their hearts in worship, the magi opened their treasure chests to shower royal gifts upon the peasant child: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

At this time of year especially, many buy gifts to win and maintain affection, but today we notice the magi gave not *to gain* God's favour, but to *thank Him* for it. Sunday by Sunday in our worship we are reminded of God's love and favour toward us. We know so much more than the Magi about what God has done – and continues to do, for us!

We have cause to be much more grateful than them – *we know* how the Jesus they saw as a baby, *became the saviour of the world* **and that** through His life and ministry, horrific death and glorious resurrection and ascension; we are promised *abundant* life on earth and that the gates of heaven are open to all who believe in Him! Is it unfair to suggest we, like the magi, should be so moved by gratitude to Christ to be generous in our giving to Him and the ministry of His church?

Can we close by reflecting for a few moments more on the five matters we have just considered; and as we do, may it be for you as it was the wise men; *a moment when you suddenly feel that you understand, or become conscious of, something very important to you; being a powerful religious experience.*

The five matters are

1. Jesus' birth partly fulfilled a centuries old prophecy;
2. Jesus came to save sinners;
3. Jesus' presence gladdens the heart of all believers;
4. Jesus humbles the wise of this world; and
5. Jesus encourages us to follow the example of the wise men and open our wallets to support the ministry of His Church.

Let us pray