

Epiphany of Our Lord

January 6, 2026



Now the Wise Men had the faith to follow the word of the Prophet Micah. They were not offended that the king was not born in Jerusalem. They left the Temple and went to the cow stall.

*– Martin Luther–
Christmas Book*

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

First Lesson: Isaiah 60:1–6

“Arise, shine; for your light has come.” After all of the suffering and sorrow brought about by the exile, Isaiah comes back to a word of promise. The darkness that has marked their time of punishment is giving way to the light of God’s presence among them once more. The mark of God’s people is hope. The promises of God pour into us a hope that shapes our lives and can be seen by those around us. It is not naive optimism, but the light of the Living God shining forth from us.

Isaiah spoke the word of promise to God’s people, the promise that God, himself, was bringing light to his people living in darkness. This promise meant no more living in despair and abandonment. Israel had reason for hope. Their time of exile, abandonment, and punishment, was ending. God, himself, intended to take up residence with them. This was a word of hope, not only for Israel, but for all the world.

- *What are some obstacles to living in hope? What renews our hope in this midst of despair?*
- *Has anyone ever said to you that they see the light of God shining in you? Can you see that in others?*

Psalms 72:1–11 (12–15)

This psalm, attributed to Solomon, is a prayer for the leadership of the king and the king’s son. Martin Luther spoke regularly about how leaders are chosen by God to serve the people, this psalm is a wonderful example of that viewpoint. It asks God for the qualities in a leader that will ensure the people are cared for in justice and mercy. It acknowledges that the political success of the king affects the people he rules. Luther expressed this sentiment in his *Address to the Christian Nobility* (1520), where he wrote: “God has given us a young and noble sovereign for our leader, thereby stirring up fresh hope in our hearts; our duty is to do our best to help him and to avail ourselves of this opportunity and his gracious favor.”

- *Do these words from Luther mean that the actions of our civic leaders are always in accord with God’s will?*
- *How is praying for our leadership an act of faith in God, not necessarily in the one being prayed for?*

Second Lesson: Ephesians 3:1–12

St. Paul explains to the church in Ephesus how God charged him with the “stewardship” (ESV) or “commission” (NRSV) of God’s grace. That is, Paul was entrusted with the message

of salvation in Jesus Christ — which was now being extended to the Gentiles and the whole world through the church. The church is commissioned to be the steward of God’s eternal purposes.

Paul understands that he is servant of the gospel that had been made known to him. He served this gospel by proclaiming it. The whole church, likewise, has a part in this mission. It is through the church that God’s word reaches into every corner of the world.

- *How might we, as the Church, understand the gift bestowed on us as stewards of the mysteries of God’s eternal purposes, but also acknowledge the tremendous responsibility as well?*
- *What are some of the ways we carry out the task that has been entrusted to the church? What are some things that get in the way of carrying out that work?*

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 2:1–12

Herod was not pleased with the notion that a new king had been born in Israel, and that he hadn’t been born into Herod’s house. This newborn king was a threat to Herod’s power and place in the world. But the main reaction Matthew describes is fear. Herod was frightened by the news of the birth of a king. And all of Jerusalem was frightened with him. They had come to rely on the good will of their Roman rulers. Any whisper that a challenger for the throne had been born would cause political turmoil and bring unwanted Roman attention to Judea. Herod wanted to head this off as quickly as possible.

The magi, naively assumed that any new king born in Israel must have been born to Herod. They unknowingly had a hand in endangering, not only Jesus, but all the children of Bethlehem. They had mistakenly assumed that the king of Israel must be in tune with the will of the God of Israel. They didn’t realize that Herod had cast his lot with Rome. Even the plans of God himself could not be allowed to upset the precarious peace.

But the wise men knew that Jesus was the one worthy of their honor. They knelt before him and gave him gifts. But Herod they defied by ignoring his direct order to report to him the whereabouts of the newborn king.

- *What does the experience of the magi with Herod tell us about the relationship between earthly rulers and God’s rule?*
- *In what sense was Jesus, even as a baby, a legitimate threat to the powers of this world?*