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## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 The Feast of the Epiphany

### Collect

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

### Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 60: 1 - 6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

### New Testament Reading: Ephesians 3: 1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that

through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

### HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 2: 1 - 12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### Post-communion prayer

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Reflection

The scene is complete. The nativity figures are in place. The baby Jesus has arrived. A proud mother and father look on adoringly and animals murmur and shuffle in the background. Shepherds, fresh from the hills are close by and the Wise Men from far away, in all their finery, offer their riches to this new born baby.

It feels like a completed story and an ending. Advent has given way to Christmas and our celebrations are drawing to a close. The shepherds can return to their hill and fields and the Wise Men can make the long journey home. Mother, father and baby can leave their temporary accommodation and journey to their home in Nazareth. What has changed?

The important point of the story is that change has happened. What was spoken of in the past, through the prophets, has come to pass, has happened. Things are different and the story continues, but a little new born child has turned things upside down and inside out and it

will not be the same for anyone in that nativity scene, ever again. People have been witness to this change, ordinary men, rich and influential men and it can be a secret no longer.

What changed for the shepherds? What changed for the wise men? What changed for Mary and Joseph? Well, we know a little of their story, but nothing about the shepherds and wise men.

Could they have remained unchanged by what they saw? Surely not. Called, as they were to be present at the birth of Jesus and called to witness to his divinity, they left as different people.

How do you hold onto something so wonderful and not want to tell everyone? How do you experience something so extraordinary and not want to re-evaluate your whole life because of it?

If we think in pictures and imagine a journey from beginning to end, then we must journey hopefully and with a sense of anticipation, that we will be different people at journeys end. The journey we take with Jesus through the gospels and epistles, changes those New Testament who risk letting change enter their lives. We hear nothing more of shepherds or wise men, but all of humanity, in all its variety, strength and frailty is there and the choices they make, determines the amount of change in their lives.

The question of course, is where are we in the journey of life that we undertake and how has Jesus' call, if we have heard it and choose to respond, made a difference to how we experience that journey?

*Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Lift up your eyes and look around; Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.*

*Revd Ian Gardner*

## Intercessions

Gracious and all-inspiring God,

At the turning of the year, we pray for the Archbishops of York and Canterbury and our own Bishops Rachel and Robert, that you will sustain them in their ministry both public and private, that we may be wisely led.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Let us pray for the Parish Church Council of this church and our sister churches in the benefice as they make decisions about the future and find ways to sustain ministry and mission.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We continue to pray for local businesses as they struggle to survive this strange time. We pray for the many local charities who are again finding it hard to make ends meet at this time.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

As we give thanks for the rollout of two vaccines in this country, we pray for a just distribution of the vaccine to those who need it most. We continue to hold in our minds the NHS and all care staff who continue to be over-stretched and constantly facing danger.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

As we discover what the new relationship with Europe is going to mean, we pray for a strengthening of ties of understanding and culture between us and our closest neighbours.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

As our minds turn toward the year ahead, help us to let go of the bad memories of the past year, and help us to face the hidden experiences which the new year will bring us, with courage and faith.

**Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are ill or distressed in any way remembering particularly especially Keith, John, Dave, Bryan, Bob, Sue, Lynne, Mary, Frances, Janet, Joan, Norma, Anna, Jonathan, Katy and all who care for them.

Let us pray also those who have recently died and also for those who grieve their dying Keith Preater, Dorothy Smith, Kathleen Lee, Tony Birley, Arthur Philpott, Peter Rennison, Jean Dangerfield, Joan Nightingale and Shirley Stewart

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We conclude these prayers with the words used by King George VI in his 1939 Christmas broadcast

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

Merciful Father,

**Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*Revd David Vonberg*

*If you would like someone who is currently unwell or in particular need of prayer to be named on the weekly pew sheet, please email the parish office giving the person's name and also your name as the contact*

## Live Stream Service for 3rd January

The 10am service from St James will be live streamed. To join the service, click on <https://youtu.be/NiHxplwIG3w> or go to [www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk](http://www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk) and click on the link that will take you to the recording on YouTube.

**It is very important that you let us know if you are planning to attend a Sunday service.** Please leave a message on 549280 or email [ewelmebenefice@gmail.com](mailto:ewelmebenefice@gmail.com)

Please continue to check the Ewelme Family Facebook page and the Benefice website [www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk](http://www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk) regularly and if there are members who you know do not use any of these media, please let them know what is going on.

Printed copies of the weekly pew sheet are available to pick up from the porch in St James from Friday lunchtime. The porch will be left open every day. For those who can't come into Dursley, especially from Nympsfield or Uley, please do contact the office if you know of someone who would appreciate a printed copy.

### Churches open for private prayer

The pattern for opening the churches continues to be:  
St James, Dursley: Mondays & Thursdays from 9.30am  
St Giles, Uley: Tuesdays & Fridays from 10am  
St Bart's, Nympsfield: Wednesdays & Sats from 10am

### Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January

11am Funeral of Dorothy Smith in St James

### Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> January

10am Holy Communion in St James

### Service Sheet for Worship at Home

If you are unable to join the Sunday services, please do make use of the reflective service for use at home alongside the prayers and readings for the day which can be found on this pew sheet.

If you would like a copy please contact the office  
[ewelme parishoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ewelme parishoffice@gmail.com)

### Pastoral Care

Please continue to let Canon Michael (546459), Revd Ian Gardner (546895) or Revd Jane Wood (07983 623525) know of those who need to be contacted or those who are in hospital and we will get in touch. Marion Kee (860364) or Pat Jones (860696) are also happy to be contacted for Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield.

#### Food Bank

The Food Bank is now operating and donations are welcome. Uley village shop and both Tesco's and Sainsbury's have food donating points which can be used. Please continue to donate.

Recycle your old mobile phones and printer cartridges, and support the British Red Cross.  
Collecting Box in the Porch at St Giles  
(TONER & LASER CARTRIDGES NOT ACCEPTED)

#### Churches Together are co-ordinating a collection of used postage stamps and Christmas Cards, in aid of the Cobalt Unit in Cheltenham.

There will be collecting boxes for stamps & envelopes in the porches at St Giles and St James for the next couple of weeks.

Please donate any used stamps you may have, and support a good cause.

Please leave a narrow border of the envelope around each stamp.

### Stewardship, Parish Giving Scheme, gifts and donations

**Very many thanks** to all members of our church community who have helped us financially by registering for the Parish Giving Scheme, increasing contributions through the Parish Giving Scheme, sending cheques to the treasurers or making bank transfers into our parish bank accounts.

These acts of generosity are really, really appreciated.

Please visit our website for quick and tax efficient online ways of giving -

<https://ewelmebenefice.co.uk/coronavirus/>.

You can also donate directly via on-line banking:

#### Uley account:

Barclays 20-33-83 A/C 43042057

#### Dursley account:

Lloyds 30-98-29 A/C 02391588

Dursley PCC

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