

My understanding of “The Epiphany” has four aspects

- Jesus drew outsiders (Gentile nations) to worship. They adored this Jewish baby after tracking him down using a star (Magi /Astronomers from the East)
- He was revealed as a King, even in diapers. (Gold is the metal of Kings)
- He was named a priest, even in the manger (Frankincense is the incense priests use in worship)
- He was being anointed to offer his life, even as he was just beginning life (Myrrh is an oil for burial)

Generically, an epiphany is an “aha” or insight. Matthew’s story is very specific in that Jesus was “The Epiphany” for all nations. I might slip back and forth between general “ahas” and the specific Matthean epiphany to the Gentile nations. Generic or specific, the more we worship Jesus, the more we offer our best to God. We give our best, we become more like Christ. Luther the Reformer wrestled with this idea, but it is C.S. Lewis who really made it succinct. As Lewis sees it, our “job” is to become “little Christs”

Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His (sic) way, come to share in the life of Christ...Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else...Finally, if all goes well, turning you permanently into a different sort of thing; into a new little Christ, a being which, in its own small way, has the same kind of life as God; which shares in His power, joy, knowledge and eternity. From Mere Christianity

We are divine and are becoming more divine. We are becoming more Epiphanic. We are becoming fuller of light. Don’t misunderstand me. I am not saying *We are God*, but I am saying that we become more and more divine as God works through us. My Christ-likeness is clear to me even in the deeply imperfect sack of flesh, brain and bone that I am. **Sidenote** fussing at your kids or yelling at your priest because her mask did not look right on video or nagging your grandkids to call because you are lonely, does negate your divine side. These feelings and actions are a window, an invitation to grow into our divinity. Being off the path does not destroy the epiphany path ~ we are a never finished project, and the road is always there to keep hiking.

I don’t believe this is mushy headed. I have not subscribed to the latest lululemon shopping bag cliché for a robust faith. The germ of the idea of little-divine-christs is much older than even Luther. This thought has continued in an unbroken chain of thought in the Orthodox Church for millennia (Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Antiochian, etc.). The western church (Roman Catholic and Protestant) often focuses somewhere more tangible than personal divinity. Blood and sacrifice have historically dominated RC architecture and liturgy (even after Vatican II). Resurrection and victory still dominate the religious worldview of the more Protestant westerner. As a supplement to the western water we swim in, this Orthodox stream of thought can balance us and is summed up in theosis (we are being made divine by God’s action in our life). The Orthodox are generally much more comfortable with epiphany than many of us Episcopalians are.

Back to the story and what it asks of us.

- *Welcome outsiders:* We light a flame for magi to come into our lives. We ask them to speak and see truth that we can’t. Magi brought something special and are stand ins for the goodness of the world that we can welcome. Outsiders are not the enemy, but a gift to our faith and church.
- *Become Kings and Queens:* It takes a peculiar humility to embrace your true authority. You are not only a child of God, but a Queen of God. Are you brave enough to speak with authority? I don’t mean be the loudest, or the one who always tries to dominate the room, or demand people’s attention. But be willing to speak with a grounded, deeply internalized authority – my fellow little Christs and Kings.

- *Practice Holiness:* Are you willing to keep pressing toward holiness the way a priest kindles the embers of the incense offered? With all the precision you can muster, try offering your whole being on the altar of God's embrace.
- *Let go:* Are you willing to let go of everything that hinders you walking on the divine road? You have the courage to take stock of your life and let go of those things that are dried up in you like fall leaves. You are strong enough to let go of that which no longer serves.

If you say yes to these, even partially, then you are embracing "the Epiphany" of Matthew and more general epiphanies that God is itching to show you.

Matthew in Context: Matthew saw Jesus in light of the whole Exodus story

- Pharaoh killed the first born; Herod - toddlers.
- Moses was hidden in plain sight from Pharaoh; Jesus hides in Egypt from Herod.
- Pharaoh tricks Moses over and over as they try to leave Egypt; Herod tries to trick the magi into being his puppet in hunting down Jesus.

Matthew writes about the Epiphany as a capstone to Isaiah ~ *Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.* Magi aren't exactly Kings, but I believe Matthew wanted you to see them as emissaries of the larger world. Matthew inspires me to think of the magi as priestly kings, not by consecration but by action. They streamed to the light of Jesus and offered gifts fit for King, Priest, and Savior. They left a little more like all three. **Bible exercise** Read Exodus 1 and 2 and then immediately read Matthew 1 and 2. I think you will understand more of what Matthew is driving toward.

Poem I leave you with a new favorite poem, fellow little christs. How are you going to live your wild and precious life as queens, priests, and offerings? If all these ideas feel like a lot of teasers, they kind of are. I am going to really be jostling with these ideas over the next few weeks of the Epiphany season. **Todd**

Who made the world?
 Who made the swan, and the black bear?
 Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean~
 the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
 the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
 who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down ~
 who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
 Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
 Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
 I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
 into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
 how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields
 which is what I have been doing all day.
 Tell me, what else should I have done?
 Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
 Tell me, what is it your plan to do
 With your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver -The Summer Day