

Do you *know* ... it's *still* Christmas?

In the *Church*, the Christmas season ends *next* week –

When we celebrate the *Baptism* of the *Lord*.

Today we use this Sunday to celebrate the *Epiphany*.

It's *really* on December 6th –

Which is the 12th day of Christmas we *hear* about in that *song*.

So, what *is* this Feast of the *Epiphany*?

Epiphany means *enlightenment* –

or the *revelation*... that Jesus *Christ* is the light of the world.

So, the King of the Jews is born in the City of *David* – *Bethlehem*.

But He's *not* just the king of the Jews,

But the king of *all* kings –

Represented by the *three* kings from the *orient* (*another song!*).

We know them as *Caspar*, *Balthasar*, and *Melchior*.

The first *Gentiles* to behold the *Christ child*.

They are the three *magi* –

Wise men –

Wise for seeking God's *presence* in the world –

Seeking to *see* the world through *God's* loving eyes –

Eyes of *respect* and *concern* for the *stranger* and for the *weakest* among us.

They followed the light of the *Star* of Bethlehem –

Only to be forever *changed* by an even *brighter* light –

Christ's light –

The gift that keeps *on* giving –

Guiding the human heart on the *right* path – into the way of His *peace*.

Most folks may have already boxed *up* their Christmas decorations,

And kicked any *natural* Christmas trees to the *curb* for *disposal*.

We no longer hear *Christmas* on the radio now.

And all the clearance *giftwrap* and *candy* is wiped *out* –

Making way for *what?* *Valentine's* Day?

Is Christmas *over* for us?

Have we *consumed* what we wanted out of this *holiday*,

And gone *back* – back to *business-as-usual*?

The *Magi* didn't!

It says they *opened* their treasures to the baby Jesus,

And in *giving* Him their *hearts* –

Their lives were forever *changed* –

They went home by *another way* –

The way of *Christ* –

Guided by *His* light.

And they *carried* that light *out* – *beyond* Bethlehem –

Beyond *Israel* –

And into the *foreign* places that *they* called *home*.

They gave *three gifts* to Jesus.

First – *Gold* –

The gift *fit* for the *King* of Kings.

A King who ruled by a *divine love* –

Not from a *palace* –

But from a *manger* –

Shepherding us to *shine*, children of the *light*.

Second – they give *frankincense* –

A gift fit for a *priest* –

With *Jesus* as our *High Priest* –

Who *lifts* all of our prayers and cares –

All our fears and *hopes* –

To *heaven* – from where our Father *longs* for us.

Jesus *is* that *bridge* between heaven and earth –

Between the *human* and the *divine*.

Third – they gave *myrrh* –

The fragrant oils with which a dead *body* is anointed.

Jesus our *king* and our *priest* –

Is also our *sacrifice* –

The *sacrament* of *salvation* –

The *Lamb of God*.

And the wood of the *manger* moves to the wood of the *cross* –

The *throne* for the *only* kingdom that shall *endure* – the kingdom of His *love*.

In coming *out* of the darkness to *receive* Him and His *light* –

How *can* we go *on*: *business-as-usual*?

How can we *not* be changed?

May *we* open our treasures to Him like the *Magi* –

The treasures of our *hearts* –

And may we *live* and *move* and have our *being* –

By the light of *Christ*.

And let it *shine* for our fellow travelers –

Fellow *seekers* –

Beyond the Bethlehem of this church –

Answering *evil* with *good* –

Drawing *all* toward the *light*.

Welcoming the *stranger* –

Forgiving our *enemies* –

Becoming the *strength* that the *weakest* among us are in *need* of.

May we not *add* to the *ugliness* of the dark –

Heaping only *more* darkness upon it by our *curses* and *condemnations* or *indifference*.

Rather, may we *shine* the light that *scatters* all darkness –

The light of *Christ* – *compelling* us to travel by *another* way –

No *matter* how *challenging* –

May we travel by the light of *Christ's* lovingkindness – *every* day of this new *year*.