

Epiphany Vespers

Bulletin

Audio

Meditation on the Epiphany

'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness.'

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'Are you the king of the Jews?'

This the roman Pilate asks our Lord, and the answer to this Herod fears. The magi come now seeking this truth, for they seek a king, born of Judea.

Were it that this question were answered in the right, and Herod's fears confirmed, and the magi's hope justified. If, indeed, we only had a king, and not one born *of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

For we wish that the Lord would come down and establish His empire in this world among this people; a rule, terrible and great; where power produces peace, and divine authority decrees our destiny.

Where no man would seek each after his own way, *what is right in his own eyes*, but would follow the one way of God, *whose paths are paths of gentleness.*

Would it that He would rule the world from Jerusalem, that upon justice He might demand atonement; that against avarice He might command benevolence; that love and charity might not be mere campaign slogans, but state policy. That the weak might not suffer for their weakness, nor the mighty be sneered at for their might; but that the lowly would be exalted at the hands of the strong, and the strong be praised for the kindness distributed by their hand.

Would it be that wars would cease, for God alone would rule, and none against him.

That corruption would cease, for the Almighty would see all evil upon the earth, and *nothing is hidden from his gaze.*

That crime would wither away, for God would *give good things* to the hungry, and *thwart the plans of the crafty; that injustice would shut its mouth.*

The wonders he performs cannot be fathomed; and his miracles cannot be counted.

Indeed, he would wipe away every tear from our eyes. *A congregation of the righteous. A kingdom without end. A house in which to dwell forever.*

If only the Lord would take up the golden throne, and become for us the only perfect monarch to ever rule over the nations of men, that we all might be one, and be one with our king.

With this did Satan tempt the Lord, offering him all the kingdoms of the world, if He would only pay respect to him; the devil, and all of us with him.

The Lord receives the gift of gold from the magi, the proper tribute offered to a king.

'So you are a king?'

'I am.' Thus saith the Lord.

Yet in the crowns offered by men upon the earth, the Son has no interest. *His kingdom is not of this world.*

What, then, is the kingdom of God? It is a kingdom that none of us asked for, nor did we ask to live under it.

For we, who are evil, despise the things of God, and so despise the kingdom of God, and its foundation.

But what is its foundation, that we so despise it? The Lord Himself tells Pilate, which is to say, He tells us.

'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.'

It is a kingdom of the truth, a loathsome thing, for us whose ears itch for only lies. Lies promise much, and, *like stolen water, are sweet*. How dearly we cling to lies, and their promises, and to their father, the devil. Satan is a king that we deserve, for he is a king we understand, and a king we adore; even as he did with Christ, he offers us the world, and we are more than glad to take it; and take it we do, with rapacious vigor, each from another, we take it as our own, through ambition, robbery, cunning, rumor, and war. Already today, it is ours; if only we take it.

But the truth, well, *what is truth?* It offers nothing, for it has nothing; indeed it is nothing. The truth is God, invisible and imperceivable; and God is nothing, or very much like nothing, for nothing is like Him.

The truth we cast aside; it is inconvenient; and moreover, it is confusing, and of no use to us. If anything, we drive it away, or if we find it amusing, we hang it up, in our home, imprinted on wood.

Out of many towns did we drive out the truth, for *foxes have their holes, and birds their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head*. And the truth we did hang up, *even upon the tree*, and it was indeed amusing, for see how we soldiers played, and we criminals mocked.

The truth cannot be seen, for it is righteousness, and righteousness cannot be seen because among us it does not exist. It is, as far as we are concerned, nothing, for no man has seen it, or at least *seen it, and lived*.

But the Son has come, and indeed he takes on the regalia of a king from the gifts of the magi; a kingdom He will establish, not of false promises, but of the invisible truth, of the unfound righteousness; of God, *who no man has ever seen*.

Now, we read, He has come to His cousin John to be baptized, and why this? It is simple: *to fulfill all righteousness*.

What does this mean? And what is this righteousness? This goodness? This truth?

Surely, we do not know. But there is no doubt that once we find out, we will hang it up, in our home, imprinted on wood:

'Even upon the wood of the cross.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Meditation Texts: Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 85; Matthew 3:13-17.