

Sunday 4 January 2026, Epiphany

Collect:

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings for this week:

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72 (1-9) 10-15; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

There are many gifts to be found in today's readings. The opening verses of Isaiah 60 mark the midpoint of the collection known as 'Third Isaiah', which may be the work of a third author (First Isaiah being chapters 1-39 and Second Isaiah 40-55). In chapters 60-62 we find promises and announcements of Israel's restoration, as here where the prophet proclaims to the remnant returning to their homeland that God has given them the great gift of their freedom. As part of their rehabilitation as the chosen people they must learn how to best use that freedom for God's service. By doing so they will mirror God's saving love, which will, in turn, draw the nations to the light of truth that they shine, which we now see in the Epiphany light that draws representatives of the nations to the manger. The peoples stepping into God's presence also bring gifts, signs of their gratitude, their obedience, skills and experience which they will devote to the cause of building a holy, compassionate and just world.

Psalm 72 lays out the promises made by a king at his coronation to his subjects, which is usually perceived to be the dawning of a new era. A prayer is offered that the new monarch will receive the gift of justice and will extend this to his people, ruling them wisely, compassionately and fairly in a reflection of divine justice. Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians, fleshes out Isaiah's promise of a gift to the nations. In this passage he describes Christ not just as a mysterious gift to his own chosen people, Israel, but also to the Gentiles, that is, everyone outside the fold of Judaism. Boundaries have been broken and there are no limits as to where God's love will reach. For Paul, his role as a servant of Christ is a seriously wonderful gift of God's grace, so valuable to him that he is willing to endure imprisonment of the sake of the Gospel.

We conclude with the familiar Gospel of the Magi: having made their way East, surmounting numerous perils, reaching the territory of their ancient enemies, which is ruled by an untrustworthy leader, the Magi doggedly pursue their objective to offer their rich presents to the child who they believe is to draw all peoples together as God's children. With their arrival the impact of the gift of God's son begins to reach outwards, to embrace all nations and all creation just as Isaiah described.

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.

Readings for next week:

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Baptism of Christ