



Daily Prayer For Individuals and Families

Adopted from *The Lutheran Service Book* (p. 294)

January 8th, 2023 A.D.

Epiphany Sunday

This brief service is intended as a simple form of daily prayer for individuals and families. When more than one person is present, the psalm and responses may be spoken responsively, with one person reading the words in regular type and the others responding with the words in bold type. The Creed and Prayers that are in bold type are to be said by all.

The sign of the cross ✝ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm

(From Psalm 45)

I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
therefore nations will praise you forever and ever.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of
uprightness;

you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

For those with access to the internet, you may now play today's worship video, located on Bethany's website (www.bethanycr.org) under the Worship Resources tab and then continue with the Apostles' Creed. Everyone else may continue the service as printed....

Scripture Lesson

(Matthew 2:1-12)

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶"*And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.*"

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child,

and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.¹¹And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Sermon – ✠ Kings ✠ *(A copy is included at the end of this service.)*

Apostles’ Creed

☩ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer



**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass
against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and
ever. Amen.**

Bethany’s Prayer List

Thanksgiving

-Kierra– DCE intern inducted today

Entrusting into God’s Care

- Persecuted Christians and refugees
- Those suffering after the storm and during the pandemic
- Peace in Europe and throughout the world
- Project 24 students, Yvonne and Lorine

Healing

- Doug Knutson– upcoming cataract surgery 1/11 & 1/25
- Carol Grimminger– recovering at Cottage Grove after surgery
- Ethel Dohrmann– cancer treatment
- Candi Engel– hospitalization
- James Ball - health issues
- Bonnie Bubke - recovering after hospitalization
- Zimmerman family - recovering after car accident
- Lorena (sister of Brenda Heims)- recovering after surgery
- Ken Cook - recovering after surgery
- Don Hein - recovering after surgery
- Philip Hackbardt - recovering after tumor treatment
- Doug Knutson - recovering at home after surgery
- Dave Dohrmann - recovering after surgery
- Stephen Stepanek - brain cancer treatment
- Abi Clark - health issues

Homebound

- Dorothy Freese– Keystone Place

Mourning, friends and family of

- Marcia (relative of Brenda Heims)- died 12/29
- Norm Rutz - died 12/26
- John (brother of Donice McDonald) - died 12/26
- Winona (sister of Bonnie Breiholz)- died 12/24
- Joyce Fritz - died 12/15
- Carol (mother of Kris Larson) - died 12/15

Serving Our Country

- Mitchell & Benjamin (relatives of Schoens & Smiths) - US Navy
- Harrison (son of Siecks) - US Army, deployed to Poland
- Jordan (grandson of Kim Neuhaus) - National Guard, deployed

Collect of the Day

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your divine presence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Concluding Prayers

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Together we pray... **I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



✠ *Kings* ✠

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There are at least two historical inaccuracies in one of my favorite Christmas or Epiphany hymns by John Henry Hopkins - “We Three Kings.” First is the number three. Matthew doesn’t say how many Magi came to visit Jesus. He just says “wise men from the east came to Jerusalem”. The plural subject of that sentence tells us there were more than one. Were there two? Were there twenty? We don’t know. We have traditionally gotten three from the three gifts mentioned in verse 11, the logic being that if there were three gifts there must have been three men. But such logic is flawed...Let’s say that I received 5 Christmas presents this year. That doesn’t mean that five people gave me presents. Perhaps my wife and son each gave two, with my dog giving me the last one.

So, the “three” in “We Three Kings” is not necessarily accurate. Neither is the description “kings.” Again, it seems as if the gifts are to blame for this misunderstanding. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were very expensive. Such gifts tell us that these men had abundant resources. They had money that allowed them to travel and to give Jesus what they gave him. But such wealth does not necessitate royalty. Matthew calls them Magi or *Magoi*. A term that usually doesn’t refer to royalty, but rather a group of shady and unsavory magician astrologer types from the east.

I’m sorry if this ruins this Christmas carol for you, but here in 2:1–12 there are not likely three kings. However, there are two! Matthew wants us to take note of two kings—King Herod and King Jesus. Look at verse 1, “*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king . . .*” Look also at verses 3 and 9. Verse 3 begins, “*When Herod the king. . .*,” and verse 9, “*After listening to the king. . .*” Thus, we have the first king - King Herod.

The second king is obviously Jesus. In verse 2 the Magi say of him, “*Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?*” Then, also in verse 2, they speak of “*his star*”—which most scholars believe is a reference to the oracle of Balaam, “*a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall*

rise out of Israel” (Numbers 24:17). This star in the sky symbolizes to them this “star”—the coming of the ideal king, from the Jews, for the world. Look also at verse 4, where Herod inquires about “*where the Christ was to be born.*” The Greek word for “Christ” means “anointed one” or “king.” Also look at the prophecy in verse 6 that speaks of “*the rulers of Judah*” and “*a ruler*” who is to come. So, we have “*his star,*” “*the Christ,*” and “*a ruler.*” These are all different words than “king,” but are royal language about the same person – our King Jesus Christ.

As we read the Gospel of Matthew, and indeed the entire Bible, there is no doubt about who the true King really is. Herod thinks he’s all powerful, but we know that His kingdom was a mere breath in history. Christ our King on the other hand, lives and reigns forever. So the question for us on this Epiphany Sunday is not really who is our King - we know that. Rather, the better, the more relevant question is how will we react to our King?

First, we can be indifferent. This is the choice made by the Jewish religious leaders. The wise men come to town and say in effect, “Where is he? Where is the Christ-child?” Herod gets wind of their question, and in his jealousy he is “*troubled*”. While he gladly accepts the title “the King of the Jews,” his knowledge of the Hebrew Bible is insufficient. So, he calls in the experts—the chief priests and the scribes. The scribes or “teachers of the law” knew their stuff. They spent all day meticulously copying the Holy Scriptures, word by word, line by line. They were professional Bible scholars and teachers. They didn’t have to open to Micah to know in which town the Messiah would be born, they would have known it off the top of their heads.

It is not surprising that they knew the answer. It would be “shame on them” if they didn’t. What is surprising is that they did nothing with the answer. Unlike these foreign Magi who traveled from afar, these religious experts knew the right answer and then went back to bury their heads in the Word of God. As Paul put it, they were the type who would “always be learning and never received him”.

The church is full of people like this and I do mean the church. Sure, there are people in the world who are indifferent to Jesus. They know He was born in Bethlehem, his mother’s name was Mary, he did miracles, he died on the cross, he rose from the dead. They know all this, and they just don’t care. There are lots of people like that in the world. But there are also lots of people like that in the church. If you quizzed them on Bible trivia, they’d do just fine. But if you informed them, “God in the flesh is just five miles down the street. Would you care to join me to meet him?” they would shake their heads and say, “Oh, not this time. You know the last games of the season are today,” or “I’m sorry, it’s the last day of this unbelievable New Year’s sale,” or “I’d hate to miss my Sunday afternoon nap. Maybe next time.”

This is a dangerous indifference! But it’s the world—a church world—of indifference in which we live. People know about Jesus but live as though there is no King upon the throne but them. We try to make ourselves to be our own kings and queens, and do whatever is fitting in our own eyes. But rest assured, King Jesus is not indifferent toward such false, self-appointed royalty. John the Baptist will tell us this in quite a vivid way when he says of Jesus, “*His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire*”. But if we are not indifferent towards Jesus as our King, then we can we can worship him as the Magi wisely did.

What makes what the Magi did so great, and why we celebrate it with Epiphany, is not what they did, but who did it. Who worships the King of the Jews? Does Herod, the earthly king of the Jews? How about the Jewish scribes and chief priests? Do all the Jews in all Jerusalem? No. But how about those Gentiles who are not from the promised land? Do they bow down in homage? Yes, they do.

So, what is Matthew doing with this fact? What is the importance of who received Jesus? With the Magi, Matthew is echoing what the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in Luke 2:10, 11: *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* The kingdom of heaven is wide enough to accept all people - Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, the seemingly righteousness and knowingly unrighteous. This King, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas is for the lowly Jewish shepherds, the wealthy Gentile Magi and everyone in between, including you. Because this King, Jesus Christ, did not come into this world to be worshipped. He came to die and rise again for everyone. So that you might receive the free gifts of forgiveness and salvation. And having received these gifts from Him, that is truly a reason, not to be indifferent, but to join with the Magi and all believers, to worship Jesus as our King. Amen.

