

The Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord

6 January 2021

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (Ephesians 3:11)

We have concluded yet another Christmas Season, a time of year we delight in the giving and receiving of gifts, delicately, intricately wrapped giving an element of surprise of what lies within.

When someone who loves you places a beautifully wrapped gift in your lap and says,..."Whatever you find be assured it is all yours," the element of surprise and momentary anticipation leads us to feel loved and cared for.

Christmas ultimately is a time we celebrate God's gift of love, His Son, His Word made flesh- God made flesh.

Today we enter the Season of Epiphany, a time we take note of heart and of mind that this Jesus being revealed is actually God Himself.

At that, I'd like to point you to that beautifully wrapped gift again and say to you that when it comes to God's gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, there is a clear distinction to be made between surprises and revelation.

Well into Jesus' ministry, He came upon a crippled man at the pool of Bethesda. As the Gospel according to St. John shares, Jesus had known this man had been in this condition for a while. Jesus asked Him, "Do you want to be healed?"

Sounds as if Jesus, a man, is about to do a God thing. He did. The man was healed at the voice of Jesus.

The Jews questioned this man healed. Investigating this thing that had happened. And, as St. John tells us,...

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:18)

Jesus lovingly responds to their murderous scheme. At a pivotal point of His response He says,

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)

In others words, “You behold this man healed. And, you have the Scriptures. So, why are you surprised, shocked, and angered that it was me that did it?”

Hear again what our precious Lord said of Scripture. It is “they that bear witness about me.”

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to Jesus it’s not about surprises. It’s about the revealing of Jesus as God in the flesh and that that actual flesh is God Himself.

The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3).

And, from Colossians we read of Jesus, that “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:19-20).

Let’s say it this way: You know Jesus, you know God. You have Jesus, you have God. When You behold the nature of Jesus, you the beholding the very nature of God.

This fullness of God is every bit of who God is and every bit of God’s nature that God created you to have, behold, fear, cherish and love.

What is that fullness of God, that nature of God all about? The kind of God who through His only begotten Son, would reconcile to Himself all things, by the blood of the His Son’s cross.

Look upon the Son of God on the cross and hear God as He stretches out His arms to taking the nails and proclaiming to the world, “I am God.”

Look upon Jesus on the cross and know there are no surprises but that Christ crucified is the full revelation of God’s mercy. Look upon Jesus on the cross and know there are no surprises but that Christ crucified is the full revelation of God’s grace.

It is that place and time upon the cross, that place and time of God’s full revelation of His mercy and grace, that Jesus’ heart yearned with passion to be. As an infant, a child, as that 12 year boy in the temple, as the man coming up from the water of His baptism, as the One healing and preaching and teaching, ... through it all, Jesus’ heart and mind, and all He is, His very nature, propels Him to that cross of suffering and death.

His heart being filled with passion and obedience to be the Lamb of God.

Jesus, God in the flesh and flesh as God,... all in, and all to be, and all about, being the Lamb of God. To be stripped, slaughtered and crucified. His blood and life as the payment for our sin.

This proclaims everything of the nature of God. That He provide His One and Only precious Son as payment for our wretchedness, for our iniquity.

All that the barrier of sin and death and the devil between God and all of us be destroyed.

This nature of God should be no surprise. For Scripture bears witness of this,... and, you have these Scripture.

No surprises only the revelation of God.

As we hear in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (ch.16), Jesus began to show His disciples the ultimate plan for His life on earth. That He must enter Jerusalem, suffer many things and die.

Peter pops up and rebukes Jesus as if shocked, surprised, and angered at Jesus!

Jesus turned to Peter and says,

Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. (Matthew 16:23)

Jesus was heading to that cross, that's all there was to it. It not only was His purpose for His life on earth, but it was the eternal passion and nature of God for Jesus to be upon that cross.

Anything less would be the devil's delight and ultimately our complete loss of the hope of salvation. Yet, Jesus would not stand for that. He would not stand; in fact He would hang.

Peter was shocked at what Jesus told them because Peter did what Scripture does not allow us to do. Peter separated Jesus from the cross.

As Jesus said, the Scriptures bear witness of Him.

There is nothing of Scripture superfluous to Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, and that flesh as God.

These blessed and holy Scripture further do not allow us to separate Jesus from His Cross of suffering and death. These Scripture do not allow us to separate Jesus from His Resurrection, from His Ascension, from His seated position at the right hand of God, from His judgment of all on the last day, nor from His inheritance of all the riches of God's Kingdom.

These same Scriptures also do not allow us to separate Jesus and all He won for us upon that cross from the water by which you were baptized. These Scriptures do not

allow you and me to separate Jesus and the forgiveness of our sins received in Absolution and the Lord's Supper. They do not allow us to separate Jesus from our blessed identity as beloved children of God before the eternal throne of God.

Be assured, as you unwrap this gift of Life, Jesus Christ, Life Himself, all throughout your life, there are no surprises only revelation of what all you now already have in Him. Your relationship with the Savior, your brother, Jesus Christ, your relationship with God the Father and, your relationship with God the Holy Spirit.

It is my prayer, that this Scripture stay with you and you stay with this Scripture, and that every discovery you make concerning God's declared relationship with you through His Son, Jesus Christ, be of no surprise but blessed Epiphany after blessed Epiphany. Amen.