

# ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, RASTRICK

## Welcome to Morning Worship for Epiphany

### 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

*Click on the underlined links to take you to safe content on the internet.  
If you are able light a candle as you start the service and if others are in the house  
encourage them to reading some of the service with you.*

#### *Introduction*

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the  
glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
God gathers us from far away and carries us  
With radiant eyes, with rejoicing hearts  
We receive the abundance God gives



#### *Prayer of Penitence*

Christ the light of the world has come to  
dispel the darkness of our hearts. In his light let us examine ourselves and confess  
our sins.

#### *Together we pray:*

Lord of grace and truth,  
we confess our unworthiness  
to stand in your presence as your children.  
We have sinned:  
**forgive and heal us.**

The Virgin Mary accepted your call  
to be the mother of Jesus.  
Forgive our disobedience to your will.  
We have sinned:  
**forgive and heal us.**

Your Son our Saviour  
was born in poverty in a manger.  
Forgive our greed and rejection of your  
ways.  
We have sinned:  
**forgive and heal us.**

The shepherds left their flocks  
to go to Bethlehem.  
Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.  
We have sinned:  
**forgive and heal us.**

The wise men followed the star

to find Jesus the King.  
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.  
We have sinned:  
**forgive and heal us.**

Hymn: [As with Gladness](#)

**The Word of God – [Click Here](#)**

The message of hope is given very strongly in the second reading, in which we hear how the Wise Men responded to meeting Jesus by offering Him valuable gifts. This same sense of Hope was given to Jews in 600BC, by Isaiah, on their return from captivity in Iraq with a Hope of the time when all nations "shall see the light" and bring gifts to Jerusalem.

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6 read by Hilary Cartwright

Second Reading: Matthew 2:1-12 read by Roger Ellis

*Reflection prepared by Canon Michael Storey*

I was watching and listening to Christmas University Challenge on Thursday. One question was - "In which book did Charles Dickens start with the words 'It was the best of times; it was the worst of times'". They didn't know. Clever cogs me knew - A Tale of Two Cities. It appears to me that today we live very much in similar times - some best, some worst.

Good things happening as with the testing and now vaccinating and the bad of people behaving very foolishly, and so pushing up the numbers in hospital and, then number of deaths. As these thoughts came to mind, it seemed as if there are many contrasts in the world today bad and good...Secular, sometimes becoming pagan, competing with the basics of Christianity on which the UK has based its ethics and, from those ethics, its laws.

It reminded me of my Robin Christmas Card which we heard on Christmas Day. Not strictly a Christian symbol for Christmas but which the tune of Silent Night was. Another contrast appeared on BBC4 on Thursday evening. A programme of origin of villages. This one was of Warkworth, not really a contrast between good and bad, but how secular can point to religious. We were shown Warkworth Castle - built by the Normans, as Normans over ran England in the 1100s. BUT at the other end of the village is a lovely Norman church. Secular power was aware of other values....so built a lovely church, with a street going from one to the other and a marketplace in front of the Norman church. I have been intrigued, as you may guess, by this mix of secular/pagan and Christianity....and bad and good in general.

One of my positive tasks, if I may presume to say so, is organising the Thought for the Week in the Courier and Echo. I covered December's, as working clergy have enough to do in December. I used, in last Thursday's papers, the song/story of the "twelve days of Christmas" to refer to New Year's Day - eighth day - 8 maids a milking, which referred to the 8 Beatitudes - positive Christian rules focussing on being humble, caring and peace-loving.

Today's 10th Day are 10 Lords a Leaping - the 10 commandments - somewhat negative Xin ethics. Interesting that this rhyme and song were written for Roman Catholics in 1558 when they were persecuted, so they could remember their beliefs. So, contrasts in all sorts of ways in the world, from the beginning time, we can say, when Adam and Eve made a bad decision and ate the apple.

Our wonderful Queen, the Head of the Church of England, "fid def" on our coins - defender of the faith gave a wonderful Christmas Message of HOPE - mentioning all faiths and their problems with covid-19 and focussing on the basic Christian Ethic of "Love your neighbour" with reminding us of the story of the Good Samaritan - a non-Jew, helping a Jew. So we are back to the beginning to our bible passages - the issue of secular v religious, bad v good.

As we thank God for this feast of Epiphany, we can recall that God has always given a message of hope, best heard, I think, by those with a faith - be it Jews back in Jerusalem in 600BC or Wise Men bearing gifts to baby Jesus, which we celebrate as Epiphany - the revealing.

May we continue this Epiphany in our lives, taking on board and living out those simple rules found in the Beatitudes for Friday, 1 January, New Year's Day. May our Resolution be to be humble, caring and bringers of peace. Amen

A Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year to all who read this or are in Church on Sunday. Michael

Hymn: [Brightest and best](#)

The Creed

We believe and declare that our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Son of God is both divine and human.  
God, of the being of the Father,  
the only Son from before time began.  
human from the being of his mother, born in the world.  
fully God and fully human.  
human in both mind and body.  
As God he is equal to the Father,  
as human he is less than the Father.  
Although he is both divine and human  
he is not two beings but one Christ.  
One, not by turning God into flesh,  
but by taking humanity into God.  
truly one, not by mixing humanity with Godhead,  
but by being one person.  
For as mind and body form one human being  
So, the one Christ is both divine and human.  
The Word became flesh and lived among us.  
we have seen his glory,  
the glory of the only Son from the Father,

full of grace and truth. Amen.

Prayers of intercession prepared by Margaret Ellis

*A prayer for our Church Growth*

God of Mission  
Who alone brings growth to your Church,  
Send your Holy Spirit to give  
Vision to our planning,  
Wisdom to our actions,  
And power to our witness.  
Help our church to grow in numbers,  
In spiritual commitment to you,  
And in service to our local community,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen.

*As our Saviour taught us, so we pray*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

*The Collect for today*

O God, who by the leading of a star  
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:  
mercifully grant that we,  
who know you now by faith,  
may at last behold your glory face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Hymn: [We three kings](#)

*Final Prayer*

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

May God keep us in all our days.  
May Christ shield us in all our ways.  
May the Spirit bring us healing and peace.  
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from us  
and pour upon us blessing and light. **Amen.**

*Our service ends with the Grace,*  
**The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the Love of God,  
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

**OLD LANG SYNE**