

Epiphany 1-6-07

(This week's message is very short because we will be listening to a testimony shared by one of our sisters in the Lord. Once a leader in the New Age movement, she miraculously found Jesus as her Savior and is living a life of service to Him.)

This is the day of Epiphany, which happens this year to fall on a Sunday. Some refer to it as the 12th day of Christmas. Others call it Theophany or Three Kings Day. In the fourth century, it was the day the birth of Christ was celebrated. By the sixth century, it became generally celebrated as the day the Magi visited baby Jesus and the day of Jesus' baptism. In both cases, it is the revealing of Christ to the world and so became known as Epiphany. The word means not only a manifestation but also can mean a breakthrough or transcendent awareness.

We have just heard our sister's moving testimony. I have been teaching you to watch for "Godincidences". What does her testimony have to do with this Sunday landing on Epiphany? She has been sharing how Christ revealed Himself to her. Epiphany is Christ revealing Himself to the world. Her story is just a continuation of that original revelation, just as is your testimony and mine. After all, that is what salvation is, the revelation of Christ to an individual and their acceptance of Him as their Savior, the One who reconciles us with God.

For many of us, this occurred when the Word of God declared to us who Christ is and what He did. We had a breakthrough, probably the greatest epiphany one can have in this life. We realized that our hearts were evil and that we needed God's intervention. We became aware that Jesus had taken our sins upon Himself and offered us His righteousness.

For some it was an instant and powerful epiphany. Life took a 180-degree turn in a single day. For others, it took years to sink in. We may have had the knowledge of it in our heads, but our hearts took a much longer time to grasp it. For us that transcendent awareness came gradually, but it was an epiphany nonetheless. Has Christ revealed Himself to you? Have you allowed your heart to receive what He did for you?

That day that Jesus was baptized, God revealed Himself to all who were present. The Father spoke in an audible voice. "This is my Son, Whom I love; in Him, I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) God declared Jesus to be His Son. The Holy Spirit descended visibly in the form of a dove. That is why the day is called Epiphany. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were manifested to the watching world.

A few of those watching the baptism were disciples of John the Baptist. They had an epiphany, the instant kind. They left John to follow the Lamb of God. Why didn't everyone drop everything and follow? Surely all those who witnessed what took place saw and heard the same thing. For some it may have taken time to sink in, but I suppose that for others it was the same reason that so few follow Jesus today. They didn't know where it would lead. They had a revelation of who He was, but they didn't have the revelation that to do anything other than follow was... well, meaningless at least.

Has God revealed to you who Jesus is and what He did for you? If you are sincerely seeking the truth, without setting your own limitations on what you are willing to accept, I would challenge you to ask God to show you why Jesus came. He is certainly capable of making it clear to you.

If you have accepted Jesus' words, have you gone on from that revelation, to committing your life to serve Him in love? Have you had the revelation that any other life is far less than what God has for you? If not, ask Him to show you that reality. Ask God to show you where real fulfillment and joy are found. Are you willing to let that revelation of His love to take hold of your heart?

I meet so many people who are throwing their lives away to drugs, or entertainment, or money. If you are going to throw your life away to some temporary thing of little value, why not give it away to your Creator? A life lived in His hands is never boring or meaningless. It is costly, and it isn't easy, but living for self is eventually even more costly. Will you hear Jesus say to you what He said to His disciples, "Come, follow me!"?

These are the two great epiphanies our sister had. They are the greatest breakthroughs anyone can experience. I pray they are yours this day of Epiphany.