

"Prisoner of Christ; Servant of the Gospel"

Ephesians 3:1-12

The Epiphany, Year A - January 6, 2007

The Rev. Todd R. Goddard, pastor

Zion West Walworth United Methodist Church

Ephesians 3:1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Prayer.

Epiphany:

A realization

That Jesus is the Son of God

And was revealed to humanity

As God in-the-flesh

That the world might not perish-

That the world might have everlasting
life.

Epiphany:

A celebratory, liturgical feast,

Recalling the wise men from the east

Who responded

When they saw "His star" rising
And following it

Until it stopped

Overhead the manger.

They were led to his birthplace in

Bethlehem

Where Jesus was revealed to them.

Epiphany:

A spiritual apparition

A vision of mystery

Made known to us by revelation;

By the sound of the Dove's

descent, or

By the movement of the Spirit's

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Breath.
The Holy Spirit
Is as independent as the wind
That blows across the field;
We neither know from whence it
comes,
Or to where it will return.
It can be with us or against us,
in us or outside of us,
in others, or absent in others.

Epiphany:
An awe-fill awareness that
We, like Paul,
Are more than mere disciples.
Each is a prisoner of Christ;
Not bound by bars or cells,
But by voluntary surrender
Of the will,
A submission of the self
To the Divine initiative.
It is a blessed moment of Epiphany
When we come to awareness
That God can look through our eyes,
Hear through our ears,
Heal with our hands,
Love with our hearts.

Christ is not only in us
But we become one with the Body-
Connected with the Christ in others,
Even Gentiles
(Though why it surprised Paul,
I'll never know!).
We share the same body
And we share the same promise.
We become the Body of Christ.
The old ways of maintaining
Autonomy
Independence
And Character
Are gone.

They are so over.
Do we really believe
That God makes the distinction
Between Protestant and Catholic
Baptist or Methodist
Jew or Gentile?
All those joined by Christ
Have become fellow heirs,
The Apostle Paul preaches,
Members of the same body,
And sharers in the promise
In Christ Jesus
Through the Gospel.

Epiphany:
In the Kingdom of God
All is stood on its head
By Divine paradox.
To be first in the Kingdom
One must become last.
To be full
One must empty the self.
To have
One must give it all away.
To be a leader
One must become a servant of all.
This Epiphany
We are called to not only
Be a prisoner of Christ
But a servant of the Gospel, too.
If we are to become the Body
We must become a servant to the Body.
Service above self,
Some might attempt to quote.
Service for Christ' sake
And for his Gospel,
Would be more accurately stated,
that through the Church
the wisdom of God
in its rich variety

might now be made known
to the rulers and authorities
in the heavenly places.
We become the Body
When we serve the Body
Is what Epiphany also reveals today.

Epiphany:
The Bread you are about to receive
Is a symbol of the Christ in you,
In the free and independent Spirit,
That blows fresh in your life.
The Bread you are about to receive
Is a symbol of the Christ
inhabiting
and animating
the world of others.
The Bread you are about to receive
Is all about the privilege of living
As a prisoner of Christ
And as a servant of Christ
And His Gospel;
Living
As his animation
Living
As his servant and disciple.

May your Epiphany this day
Be so revealing.
Amen.