

This past Friday the Christian Church celebrated the Epiphany of Our Lord. On that day we celebrated the coming of the Magi to worship Jesus, the promised King, presenting Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The word Epiphany means revealing, enlightening, making known. The idea of Epiphany is the Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem is recognized by the world as God. At Christmas, God appeared to the world as man, born of a Virgin, laid in a manger. At Epiphany, this man appears before the world as God. The fact that Jesus became man and dwells among us needed no proof. But the fact that this man, this helpless child, is God, needed proof. Jesus is True God and True man. Jesus is the Word made flesh. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

In the Gospel lesson this morning Jesus speaks for us, at twelve years of age, His first recorded words. He says to His Mother Mary, “I must be about My Father’s business.” These words clearly reveal Jesus divine nature. He is more than man; He is the only-begotten of the Father, He is God making Himself known to us in the flesh. From His youth to His final cry on the cross we hear Jesus make the confession, “My Father.” Whether He stands in the Temple, listening and asking questions of the doctors of the Law, or He is humbly submitting to His earthly parents at Nazareth, or He is receiving the baptism of John on the banks of the Jordan River, or suffering the temptation of the devil in the wilderness for forty days, in all He does and says during His earthly life, He is about His Father’s business. He is carrying out the great and holy will of God His Father; saving the sinful world from death and the power of the devil.

And only because Jesus is the Only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Only because Jesus is True God and True Man, can He save us, and has He saved us. Through Jesus Christ, we poor, miserable sinners are brought back to God our heavenly Father, we are adopted as His dear children, made members of the household of God and given the privilege of being heirs of Gods kingdom. We now rejoice in His forgiveness and love most generously showered upon us. We now give thanks, praise, service and obedience, for the grace and mercy won for us by our Brother and Lord, Jesus Christ. Heaven is ours. Never doubt it. That is Jesus promise.

Let us consider for a moment those first recorded words of Jesus, “I must be about My Father’s business.” Our translation falls a little short; it misses the point. Other translations say, “I must be in my Father’s house.” In the original Greek, St. Luke doesn't record either the word house or business. He also doesn't render it in the first person either. It is not “I must.” But rather “It is necessary.” The best translation would be: “It is necessary for Me to be among My Father's things?”

The words, “It is necessary” indicates an Old Testament prophecy, that is, they point us to a New Testament event. “It is necessary” are the words Our Lord used to announce the necessity of His betrayal, the necessity of His beating, and the necessity of His crucifixion, passion and death. It is not that the translation “I must be about My Father's business” is wrong; it misses the meaning of what Jesus is saying, it misses the reason that Jesus is in the temple in the first place. If we don't understand what Jesus is saying we fail to connect what He is saying with His predictions of His crucifixion and death. For even at Christmas and even now with the Season of Epiphany, we need to see the bloody cross of Jesus before our eyes.

In our Gospel reading this morning where do The Virgin Mary and Joseph find Jesus? He is in the Temple. He is among His Father's things. What things? The lampstand, the altar of

incense, the altar for whole burnt offerings, the ark of the covenant. Jesus is there in the holy of holies, among the things of sacrifice, in the midst of the things that render God's Old Testament people clean through blood and reconciles them to the Father that they might bring their prayers and petitions to Him. The entire purpose of the Temple was to give God's people safe access to Him. The Temple is where God's Old Testament people were made righteous and holy before God.

And Jesus is not simply near and around the things of God; rather the point is this, Jesus is of God, He is from God. Jesus and the Father are one. He is one of the Temple things, one of His Father's things for cleansing and forgiving the people. In fact, Jesus is the thing that makes us righteous and holy in God's eyes. Jesus is where He belongs, not simply in His Father's House, but on the Altar, as the Priest and the Victim. Jesus is the Spotless Lamb of God, by whose blood washes us clean, making us His own, taking away the sins of the world, removing them from us as far as the east is from the west.

St. Luke even gives us a little hint that that is what Jesus is talking about when he says: His parents found Him on the third day. That is not accidental. Luke is doing two things, he is pointing us to Jesus' Resurrection and he is telling us where to find Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we live in the third day, we are children of the Resurrection. And where is Jesus? He is among His Father's things. He is not in the Temple in Jerusalem, that is gone; it was destroyed by the Romans in 40 A.D. Jesus is the Temple, He is the Temple they tore down and He built it up again on the third day. Jesus is the Temple of the Lord, where God dwells and abides with men, where men have safe access to the Father. Jesus is our High Priest, our only Advocate with the Father. Jesus is the new and greater Temple, risen from the dead, who now lives and reigns for all eternity.

So where is Jesus now? He is present in heaven, but more importantly for us, He is present in His Body and Blood in His Holy Supper on His altar. He is present in His Holy Word. He is present where two or three are gathered in His name, in the preaching of His Gospel, and in the Holy Absolution spoken. He is present in the life-giving water of Baptism. It is in these holy things, these means of grace, where Jesus is present for you. Jesus is in this place. It is here that Jesus is accomplishing your salvation. It is here that you see God, where He is revealed to you, where He makes Himself known. This is the place where God's glory dwells. It is here, where heaven and earth meet and where the gates of heaven are opened to you; where the promise of your salvation is made sure and certain. This is where Jesus has promised you He would be; that is why He has come, that is why He has gathered you here this morning; that you would taste and see and hear and feel God.

Let us pray. I thank You Lord, for the wonderful miracle that You live here among us on earth. The heavens cannot contain You. You hold all the world in Your hand. There is room for the universe there and still You descended to us with all Your grace and all Your mercy. Give me, now, a heart that realizes this. Take away my indifference, open my eyes, and help me to receive everything you give with humble thanksgiving. When I am critical and cold and unwilling, let Your grace and mercy overcome my selfishness and my laziness so I can rejoice in Your presence and help others understand how wonderful it is to be able to stand before You, to know Your presence and be glad that You are who You are. Amen.