

# Sermon Title: The Visit of the Wise Men

- Matthew 2:1-12; Genesis 1:1-5
- Setting: Unveiling Epiphany's Essence
- **The Wise Men's Tale:** Stripping Away Accretions
  - Debunking popular assumptions: Not necessarily three, not explicitly kings
  - The story's embellishments: Names, ethnic representations, legends, relics
- **Core Themes:** Echoes of Luke's Shepherds
  - *Light:* Symbolism, centrality in creation, Christ as the Light of the World
  - *Power and Revelation:* Unexpected recipients – shepherds and wise men
- **Power Dynamics Unveiled**
  - Contrast between shepherds and wise men
  - Opposition to Christ: Herod and the threat to established power structures
- **Relevance Today:** Light and Power
  - Darkness vs. Light in current times
  - The call to be lights in the world, reflecting Christ's light
  - Power redefined as service, inspired by Christ's example
- **Living the Epiphany Encounter**
  - Transformative impact: Eliot's reflection on the wise men's journey
  - Life after encountering Christ: Personal, familial, and societal transformation

## Discussion Points / Points to Ponder:

1. **Redefining Epiphany's Core:** How do the sermon's insights challenge traditional understandings of Epiphany and the story of the Wise Men?
2. **Symbolism of Light:** Reflect on the significance of light in both the creation narrative and Christ as the Light of the World. How can this symbolism guide our spiritual journey?
3. **Unexpected Recipients of Revelation:** Discuss the choice of shepherds and wise men as recipients of the birth announcement. What does this say about God's inclusivity?
4. **Power Dynamics and Opposition:** Explore the theme of power in the sermon. How does the opposition to Christ by established power structures resonate in today's context?
5. **Relevance of Epiphany Today:** Consider the sermon's parallels between the darkness/light dichotomy in the biblical narrative and present-day events. How can we actively recognize and be bearers of Christ's light in our communities?
6. **Servant Power vs. Conventional Power:** Reflect on the distinction between servant power and traditional worldly power. How can the church embody Christ's servant leadership in practical ways?
7. **Personal Transformation:** Share personal experiences or reflections on encountering Christ. How has this encounter altered perspectives and actions in your life or the lives of those around you?

**Alternative questions:**

1. How do the various embellishments and legends surrounding the Wise Men's tale influence our understanding of the Biblical narrative? What significance do these accretions add or subtract from the story's essence?
2. Explore the symbolism of light in the Bible and particularly in the narrative of the Wise Men. How is light intertwined with the arrival of Christ, and why is it a recurring motif throughout the Gospel?
3. Reflect on the contrast between the shepherds and the wise men. Why might it be significant that these seemingly unconventional figures were chosen to witness the birth of Christ? How does their selection challenge societal norms of the time?
4. Discuss the portrayal of power in the Epiphany story, from Herod's response to the revelation of Christ to Christ's eventual opposition by those in traditional positions of power. How does this early opposition set the stage for Christ's ministry and ultimate sacrifice?
5. In what ways can we recognize and reflect the enduring themes of light and power in contemporary society? How do current events and challenges parallel the narrative's dichotomy of light amidst darkness and the concept of servant power in a power-centric world?
6. Reflect on personal encounters with Christ. How has encountering Christ affected your life, relationships, and perspective on the world? In what ways has this encounter spurred personal or collective transformation?