**Epiphany Chapel - Facebook Jesus**

Begin by putting famous musicians, artists, politicians, etc. on the screen and ask students for facts about them. Who are they? Do you know anything else? Give me some stats.

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Do you know these people? We’ll come back to that question.

This past Sunday churches across the globe celebrated Epiphany.

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Definition: e·piph·a·ny

a.A sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something.

1. A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization

Just like Christmas is the story of Jesus’ birth and Easter is the story of his death and resurrection, generally Epiphany includes the story of the Magi, Jesus’ baptism, and his transfiguration on the mountain with his disciples. These stories reveal the true nature of this homeless rabbi from Nazareth. He’s not just a really good teacher. He’s not just some inspiring person who teaches us to live rightly. He’s not just some rebel the Romans killed like they did every other common criminal. These stories reveal something to us about the true nature of reality. We see past the physical veil into something much deeper. We glimpse Jesus for who he really is.

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**Magi**

Magi - Magi is where we get the term “Magician” from. Most likely they weren’t kings. They are wise men from the East. Foreigners who from the text, we’re pretty certain weren’t Jews. We also don’t know how many there were. Tradition tells us 3 of them but that could simply be attributed to the 3 gifts mentioned in the gospels.

We gloss over all sorts of things I find interesting in the story of Matthew 2. They ask the current “King of the Jews” --Herod—“Where is the one who was born king of the Jews?” Herod was not a nice man. By the time of his death he had killed multiple family members including relatives, two of his own sons and his own wife because they posed possible political threats to his hold on power. So when the Magi ask where to find the new king of the Jews, we already know heads are going to roll.

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Anyway, for my purposes this morning I’m concerned with one sentence in Matthew 2:11

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.”

What does this reveal about this little boy who probably hasn’t yet learned to talk? Notice what these men did; they worshiped him. These foreigners bowed their heads and recognized the deity of some peasant child.

Isaiah prophesied this some 700 years before the birth of Jesus.

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“Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (Is 60:3).

We get a peek into the deity of Jesus. We begin to understand this is the Savior; this is the Christ. We have an epiphany of Jesus.

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**Jesus’ Baptism**

Matthew keeps the story going. He fast forwards some 30 years between chapters 2 and 3 to the story of Jesus’ baptism. Again, due to time restrictions, I have to assume you know the story. Let’s pick it up in Matthew 3:16-17.

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“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Again, we see something special happening in the person of Jesus. We have a voice from heaven, interpreted by John the Baptist, saying Jesus is made of the same stuff as God; he’s God’s son--his representative here on earth. An epiphany.

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**Transfiguration**

Transfiguration is a fancy word that means to transform. Jesus was physically transformed in front of his disciples revealing his true nature.

17 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. …

5…, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

6When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

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Another epiphany: a manifestation of the essence of Jesus. This is no ordinary 1st century Rabbi. This is the Son of God. This is the Word become flesh; the one through whom the universe was made.

**Response**

The gospel writers, Matthew in particular, take this revelation of Jesus and they call for a response.

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I’m sure some of you guys can talk to me for a solid 10 minutes off the top of your head about Justin Verlander or Tom Brady. But you don’t know them… you know about them. They don’t call you at home. They don’t even know your name.

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It’s not good enough to know Jesus’ stats. Just because you can friend a cute person on Facebook and find out all sorts of things about them does not actually mean you know them. It doesn’t mean you’re actually dating them. You can’t just Facebook stalk Jesus and call it good enough.

I know I have a wide variety of people here and this won’t apply to some of you. Bear with me and let me speak to the majority of you. For many of you, this is one of the difficulties you will face for the rest of your life. You’ve grown up in a Christian home. You’ve gone to church your whole life. You go to a Christian school. You have 2 Bibles in every room in your house. You’ve probably even baptized your dog. Because you swim in Christian culture, it’s very easy to drift along with the current and think you’re doing just fine. Often we can deceive ourselves into thinking past experiences still apply to our current circumstances. Sometimes we can think we’re doing really well with our devotions and then one morning we wake up and realize we haven’t done devotions for weeks.

Please hear me on this. I’m not saying you’re a bad Christian. I’m not saying I have everything together. I think this applies to all of us equally; teachers and students alike. Simply going to church, talking about Jesus, and liking him on Facebook isn’t enough.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ (Matt 7:21-23).

He expects you not only to give lip service but to give him your life. Either he’s Lord or he’s just some crazy dude who claimed to be God. There is no in-between. Either you bow your knee and accept his demands on your life or you reject his claims. What does he want from you? He wants you.

And this isn’t a one-time decision. It’s something you decide day-in day-out. Today I choose to follow Christ. Today I choose to love him. Today I choose to confess my sins and rebellion and accept his grace and forgiveness.

As we understand who Jesus is we need to respond. Some of you have been drifting, whether it’s weeks or months it doesn’t matter, it’s time to swim to shore. It’s time to realize your farther out than you thought you were and make the effort to come back. Some of you have never accepted Jesus’ claim on your life. Now is the time to hear him calling you to himself. There is no better day than today to stop trying so hard and rest in his goodness.