

Aha Moment!

Scripture readings:

Old Testament – Isaiah 60:1 – 6,
New Testament – Ephesians 3:1 – 12,
& Gospel – Matthew 2:1 – 12

Epiphany is commonly referred as the ‘Aha Moment’ early after Jesus’ birth. You have heard of an ‘Aha Moment’? It is when something goes off in your head. It is the moment when you meet your future wife and you are overwhelmed by her beauty. It is the moment you see your child take his/her first breathe of life. It can also simply be the moment when you get a joke that everyone a round already understands – an ‘Aha Moment!’

An ‘Aha Moment’ is often depicted in cartoons when the character finally figures out how to solve a problem and a light bulb flashes above his/her head.

I have had some ‘Aha Moments’; let me share three with you:

*At the wedding I attended, the priest, Father Ariel, had an accent and at times it was hard to understand him. Just before we would pray he would say ‘You may be seated or ?????’ This happen multiple times until an ‘Aha Moment’ happened. I heard the kneelers being put down so I now knew Father Ariel said – ‘You may seated or kneel!’

*At Lycoming College during my second fall semester while in my accounting class I had an ‘Aha Moment’; it was snowing outside and I was watching the snowflakes come down. Our teacher was a local CPA and he was a good teacher. My mind as distracted watching the snow flakes come down through the window in the classroom. The teacher called on me for answer to one of the problems we were working on. I did not hear him at first, so he called on me again. I told this good teacher that I was sorry that I was looking out the window watching the snow fall.

He told me that if I was not excited about accounting and depreciation which we were working on then maybe I should not be an accountant! I thought about his words for the rest of the class and immediately after the class I went to my Advisor on campus and talked to him about changing my major. That was an ‘Aha Moment’!

*And finally many years ago, I attended a tent revival at a campground with the preacher being Rev. Steve Sprinkle. My wife and family tented there for the three day event and during one of his messages one evening he talked about barking dogs and how they are either chasing you or calling you to serve Christ. At the campfire that evening, Rev. Sprinkle spoke personal to me about his message and an ‘Aha Moment’ happened. I knew that I was being called into ministry and the barking dogs had found me.

An ‘Aha Moment’ can be dramatic or just simple but they happen. I have shared three such moments.

The wise men have an ‘Aha Moment’ when they come to bring gifts to the Christ child. Their gifts show the world and us that Jesus came to the world both as Lord and Savior. Today on Epiphany Sunday we have an ‘Aha Moment’!

In Matthew 2:1 – 12 we have such a moment!

This baby is king! We especially remember that it was the gifts the wise men that first proclaim Jesus' rightful glory.

Gold – the monetary stuff that king's possess a lot of.

Frankincense – an essential oil with a beautiful aroma which can offer a variety of health benefits.

Myrrh – an aromatic resin which in Jesus' day was used to put on a dead body to anoint the body and keep the smell down.

We really do not know how many wise men there were in the year that Jesus was born. Traditionally we say there were three. They are often remembered as kings maybe because they brought such royal gifts or some remember them as astrologers because they read and followed a star. No matter how many or who they were – they had an 'Aha Moment'!

Sometimes around 500 BC, a legend arose that the wise men were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, but we have no proof of their names. For some, we remember their arrival by placing figures of them at the manger scene during our Christmas pageants. We place them with the shepherds in the field – all gather around the manger with Mary & Joseph. We have such a scene in front of our piano – the nativity scene!

But many scholars believe the wise men visited the holy family when Jesus was a toddler, maybe two or three years old. And some modern churches in India believe that the magi or magicians came from India. In fact, while on a mission trip to India, we visited a church in India where they had a placket dedicated to the wise men and their journey to Israel. Our Christian tradition is that the wise men came from China and they were Chinese.

Whichever tradition we draw from, we really only know one thing for certain – the wise men were foreigners who traveled from far away to proclaim the miracle of the new born king – the Christ child.

In our text from the New Testament, Ephesians 3:1 – 12, we are reminded that our calling is both an individual one and communal one that can be enjoyed within ourselves and within a community of faith.

As God continues to unveil his grace to all of creation, we find the intimate and intoxicating grace that compels people like the Apostle Paul. Paul often writes about how unworthy he is of God's grace, yet the inexhaustible God is always gracious and abundant. This individual calling radiates also to the Gentiles. Here we discover a costly grace compelling Paul to share it with all people.

For us, God continues to unveil his grace to us. We will find in God's grace the intimate and intoxicating aroma that compels people like us. We may often feel unworthy of God's grace, yet the inexhaustible God is always gracious and abundant. This individual calling radiates within us. Here we discover a costly grace compelling us to share it with all people.

In our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 60:1 – 2, we move from an individual response to God's grace to the glowing effects of the presence of God.

Here we find wonderful imagery of the awesome presence of God that fills a city because its children have returned home. I want you to imagine a home filled with the laughter of children and the glow of the Holy One, Is this not what Epiphany is all about – the joy of the wise men and the glow of the Christ child?

Within all three of these texts shared today we have the proclamation and effect of God comes from strangers. It happens in a deeply personal way or it can fill a whole city with joy.

Imagine how the Holy One is engaging in the lives of you gathered here today. How is God active in the seen and unseen? How is the sacredness of God moving deeply within you? Where is the light of Christ shining in the places of your life, work, play, and learning? Are you yearning for an 'Aha Moment'?

Let us pray:

May the incredible love of the Holy One speak to your heart today. May you experience God through the blessing of someone unexpected. May you experience grace that touches your heart and changes your actions. May your city and your children be filled with laughter, joy, and grace today and every day. AMEN.