

St Peter's, Mount Park Road, Ealing  
Epiphany Sunday  
4<sup>th</sup> January 2015

## Proclaim the Good News of Jesus

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In Matthew's Gospel the first truly independent witnesses to the incarnation are Gentiles. Through word and action they are the ones that proclaim this child born in Bethlehem King, God and Martyr. They in themselves by tradition any way, are said to represent the many cultural faces of society — coming from the East, reflecting different cultural backgrounds.

Whether this happened or not Matthew uses this story to suggest the mission of the church to the Gentiles was commissioned by God through his prophets at the very beginning of the divine plan for the salvation of the world. For Matthew it is really important that the story of salvation is open to everyone from the outset.

In Matthew Jesus' whole ministry seems to be to the outsiders, outcasts and rejected of Jewish society. One of his first miracles, after teaching the crowds during the Sermon on the Mount is to heal a leper — the ultimate outcast. From the beginning, for Matthew it is important to reach out with the good news of Jesus, that is what the mission and ministry of Jesus is all about.

One of the things I struggle with is how to be as one of these Kings. How to be someone, like them, who proclaims the good news of Jesus to a world not ready or maybe not willing to receive it? As I sit in Westfield or walk through Ealing Broadway or attend a public meeting I reflect on how can I or we get these people, who often as not have not even heard the story of Jesus, who probably mix up Christmas with the story of a child born to Elvis and visited by Father Christmas and a group of dancing snowmen, let alone received the story of salvation, to hear and at least have some understanding of God's love for them? How are we to share the good news of Jesus in our community, amongst our neighbours?

The story of the Magi is a story of proclamation. It could be said to be the beginning of the next stage of the mission of God and could be the beginning of our mission.

We are told the church is dying. Less people are coming to church and more are leaving. As a church we ring our hands and say how awful it is but we are reluctant or are uncertain how to do anything about it. We feel impotent and reluctant in the face of a society that seems to reject what we have to offer — and we seem unsure of what it is we are offering. And this is because we are in uncharted waters. We are in a situation, a nation a western culture that no longer relies upon Christianity as a way of understanding itself.

Our task, put before us in the Gospels and agreed to at our baptism and confirmation, is to proclaim in word and action the good news of Jesus. We should be clear about what the good news is — that God loves us and wants us for his own. This love we proclaim in the shared meal of the Eucharist in which Christ's body and blood are consumed in bread and wine as a remembrance of that love poured out on the cross. In that love we are forgiven and asked by God to forgive ourselves. The things that consume us, that make us think less of who we are, the things in our lives that makes us value ourselves less than we ought are all taken

away, we are healed, we are forgiven and we are encouraged, through the healing love of God to forgive ourselves and start anew. To be born again, with God at the centre of our lives and the Spirit filling us with Gods power and love.

This is where our mission begins, to believe this truth for us. And then to share that truth with the world around us. In many ways we are in a similar position as that of the Magi, of the first disciples, of the apostles. We are in a world that increasingly does not know our Saviour. Yet this same world is increasingly broken and lost. It doesn't matter how much the fashionable intelligencia tells the world they do not need 'the God myth'. We know that is not true. That we are lost when we think the world revolves around us. There are those who will not want to listen there are many more who are hungry for understanding, who are hungry for healing and wholeness and have no idea where to find it. We know where hungers can be satisfied, we know where healing is freely offered and where lives can be changed and made whole. Like the Magi we are to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour as we receive the bread and wine of the holy Eucharist, as we gather around the table of God and receive God's love in our hands, broken for us that we may be whole in him.

Like the Magi, lets come to the Christ Child as ask that he may be born I us today.

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4 January 2015