

So Jesus' coming was important enough for people of other nations to honour him, which broke with Jewish tradition that the Messiah would only be king of the Jews. And he was honoured in a way which suggested that his kingship would also be like no other earthly king.

Secondly, Jesus' coming was important enough to cause tyrants and earthly rulers to tremble. Herod is threatened and disturbed by what he hears about the new-born king. And like any tyrant he wants to neutralise the threat to this power. In fact Jesus does not pose a threat to rulers in the conventional sense, but we do know from Ephesians 1 that Jesus is set far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and that his kingdom will last for ever. Once again Jesus is like no other king or leader on earth.

And finally Jesus' coming is important enough to be predicted by scripture. The well-known prophecy from Micah is quoted to Herod by the chief priests and people of law. Micah predicts that a ruler will come out of Bethlehem to shepherd God's people Israel.

Yet again, Jesus stands out as someone whose coming is predicted many years before it takes place.

So what are we going to do in response to the 'showing forth' of Jesus? Are we going to worship him as our King who came into the world to save us from our sins? Are we going to submit willingly to his leadership in our lives? And are we going to take to heart what the scriptures have to say about him and his coming?

Christmas may have been and gone for another year. But the light of Christ has come into the world, and the world has never been the same. As we begin a new year after a very difficult 2020 we need to hold on to the fact that there is not only light at the end of the COVID tunnel, but there is also the light of Christ shining in our hearts in the midst of the darkness, and there will ultimately be light at the end of our lives as we go to meet with God in heaven. So let's resolve to let the light of Christ shine into our lives afresh and shine out from us to all those we come into contact with during the coming year.

Wishing you every blessing in Christ during 2021,

Andrew

Contacts for service booking:

Zoom services: please contact Revd Victor at associateminister@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

Corsham: L'nora Olney on 01225 859202

Gastard: Sandy Fletcher at sfletcher13@aol.com or 01249 715006

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Lacock: Fiona Draper at office@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk or 01249 712935

Your contact details will be requested for NHS Test and Trace purposes. Details will be kept securely and shredded after 21 days.

St Bart's walking group: next walk **Friday 15th January**. Please contact Colin at colincraddock@gmail.com or 07570 442307 for details and to book.



The Greater Corsham and Lacock Team

The Church of England in
Corsham | Gastard | Neston
& **Lacock with Bowden Hill**
corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk

TEAM NEWS 1 - January 3rd 2021

10.00 a.m. Zoom service

10.00 a.m. Holy Communion at Corsham

Holy Communion at Gastard

Please see back page for booking arrangements.

The Rector writes...

Have you ever wondered why there is an emphasis on the coming of the wise men at this time in the church year? Well, perhaps it has something to do with the word epiphany that we associate with the season that begins on Wednesday 6 January. Epiphany means 'showing forth'. For the first time Jesus is shown to people who were not Jews, a theme I will return to later on.

This theme of 'showing forth' continues through the season of Epiphany with the celebration of the baptism of Christ on 10 January and the celebration of the presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) on 2 February.

These events during the childhood of Christ have in common a showing forth of his potential while he was still young, along with the associated prophecies about the Messiah or promised one who would come to save his people Israel.

So what can we learn from the well-known story of the coming of the wise men? I think there are three lessons we can learn from this story, all of which reflect the importance of the coming of Jesus.

Firstly, his coming was important enough for nations to honour him. As I wrote earlier, for the first time Jesus was shown to people who were not Jews. His rule was not going to be limited to the Jewish people.

As we saw during Advent, many of the prophecies about the Messiah predicted that his rule would bring justice and peace to the whole world. Matthew will end his gospel with Jesus commissioning his followers to go out and make disciples of all nations. So Jesus will be a king, but with a much wider rule than the Jewish people expected.

The gifts of the wise men also reflect the fact that he will be a king like no other. Gold was a very appropriate gift for a king, but frankincense was used to burn offerings to God in the temple in Jerusalem. So this gift suggested that Jesus was someone to worship like a God. The third gift of myrrh was used to anoint bodies after burial, foretelling Jesus' suffering and death as an adult; not quite the fairytale ending one would expect for a king.

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Collects for Second Sunday of Christmas

Almighty God, in the birth of your Son you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word, and shown us the fullness of your love: help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love that we may know the fullness of his joy; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *or*

God our Father, in love you sent your Son that the world may have life: lead us to seek him among the outcast and to find him in those in need, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31.7–14 (NRSVA) Restoration of Israel

⁷ For thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel.' ⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here. ⁹ With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.' ¹¹ For the LORD has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. ¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. ¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. ¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

New Testament Reading: Ephesians 1.3–14 (NRSVA) Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Gospel Reading: John 1.10–18 (NRSVA) The Word became Flesh

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Guidance on attending church services—reminder on tier 3 restrictions

- There must be no "mingling" of households indoors or out of doors. This means that although individuals, households and support bubbles can attend worship they must not mingle or interact with others and 2m social distancing must be maintained; this also now applies in the churchyard;
- Face coverings that fit securely around the side of the face are mandatory in church. Visors or shields may be worn in addition to a face covering but not instead of one;
- Congregational singing is not permitted so only recorded hymns (and at Corsham, the church choir) will be used at all our services.

If you are particularly vulnerable to the virus, by reason of age and/or underlying health condition, please do consider carefully if it is wise for you to attend church at present

Services currently planned for January (subject to any further changes in regulations or guidance)

Sunday 10th January

10.00 a.m. Morning Worship at Corsham; Holy Communion at Neston

Sunday 17th January

10.00 a.m. Zoom service; Morning Worship at Gastard

10.30 a.m. Morning Worship at Lacock

Sunday 24th January

10.00 a.m. Holy Communion at Corsham; Morning Worship at Neston

10.30 a.m. Holy Communion at Lacock

Sunday 31st January

10.00 a.m. Zoom service

1 Corinthians Conversations Bible Study: If you want to engage with the Bible afresh during 2021, why not attend a new Zoom Bible study on 1 Corinthians meeting weekly on Wednesdays at 11am, starting on 6 January? If you have not previously attended please email Revd Andrew at rector@corshamandlacockchurches.org.uk for an invitation.