

Column

“Jesus wants me for a sunbeam, / To shine for Him each day; / In every way try to please Him, At home, at school, at play.” These words were written by Nellie Talbotin at the turn of the 20th century. You might remember singing them in Vacation Bible School or Sunday school as children and can even now hear the bright tune that accompanied them.

A children’s song yes, but these words sum up a primary theme of Epiphany, the season of the Church Year which began on Jan. 6. That theme is that those who have received light are to be light bearers.

The word “Epiphany” comes from the Greek and means manifestation. It is a season of light. The primary Epiphany story is the coming of the Wise Men. These strangers from the east anticipate people of all races and places coming to the light of Christ. Some 700 years earlier the Old Testament prophet Isaiah spoke of just such an event: "The Gentiles

[the nations] shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3).

The glory of the promised Messiah was revealed to a number of others as well, including to Jesus' chosen band of followers at the wedding at Cana. On this occasion Jesus turned water into wine. John's account of this miracle ends with the words: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

A good way of thinking about the news of Christ going out into the world is to imagine the surface of a placid pond being struck by a pebble. When this happens, ever-expanding circles begin to appear. This is what happened with the coming of Jesus Christ.

More than that, this expansion continues down to this very day. All who have been united to Jesus in faith and baptism are called to reflect His glory into the world . . . in the words of the children's hymn, to be sunbeams for Jesus. What kind of sunbeam are you?

Do you know any lonely people? Visit them. Do you know anyone who needs a hot meal or firewood? Do what you can to meet that need.

Opportunities for being an Epiphany Christian abound if we have eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to respond.

O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Collect for the First Sunday after Epiphany, Book of Common Prayer).

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