

An outline for an Epiphany sermon

(The lectionary overlooks these appropriate texts for Epiphany.)

A beginning:

Epiphany is the 6th of January in the Western calendar. Epiphany means “shining forth.” End of the 12 days of Christmas. In the early Church this was “their Christmas Day.” This tradition continued for a couple of hundred years. Early Christians celebrated the coming of the light in this world of meaningless and hopelessness.

You’ve heard it said: “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” In bad times it’s worthwhile to do good. Or in times of trouble, it is more useful to do some good, however small, than to complain about the situation.”

It is similar to the message of the gospel song: “This little light of mine. I’m going to let it shine. This little light of mine. I’m going to make it shine. Hide it under a bushel? No! I’m going to let it shine! Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”

The song, like the saying, is a kind of pep talk for doing good. Finally, however, pep talks, however well intended, are inadequate in the face of sin, death, and the devil.

A middle:

1 John 1:5: “God is light and in him is no darkness at all.” The God of light comes to us.

And John 1:5: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” We’re lost and in darkness, on our way to nothingness. Ashes to ashes. (John 1:9: “The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.”)

John 1:13: “Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Not of blood: Not by the ancestors. Not family or heirs. Not the way we build families and civilizations.

Nor of the will of the flesh: Our human condition is “all too human.”

Nor of the will of man: Not our will. Not our way. Not our decisions. John 6:44 and 6:65: “No one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father” and “You did not choose me but I chose you.”

But of God: The light explodes in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it (John 1:5 KJV). God does it. By light overtaking darkness.

The Gospel of John doesn’t have a Christmas story like Matthew and Luke. For the Gospel of John this (John 1:1-14) is the Christmas story! Into this world of darkness the light explodes. Into this world of darkness comes the one who dies and rises again.

An end:

John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.” Glory, light. By the will of God: The will of God is the cross and resurrection.

Stated again in another way by the Apostle Paul: 2 Cor 4:6: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

Light, glory.