

The Anglican Church of St Philip's O'Connor, Canberra, ACT, Australia
Services on Sunday: Holy Communion 8am and 10am. Wednesday 10am

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Wardens: Chris Cheah, Janine Studholme, Devin Combs Bowles

30th January 2005. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Rob Lamerton

Readings:

Micah 6:1-8

Psalms 15

1Corinthians 1: 18-31

Matthew 5: 1-12

There are two Leightons! It's been said of the other Lleyton, that he may be a brat, but he is OUR brat! It cannot be said that he is NOT competitive! c'mon!

What is the epiphany today?

As we saw last week, Epiphany begins a journey, and along the way things are made known about Jesus and his mission. Last week it was Jesus' universal message — that he is the Light for the Nations.

Not just that he gives *me* hope — that he is *my* personal saviour — BUT that he is the Lord who has answers for the world and humanity.

Oddly enough, two days before we pondered the idea of Jesus the Light of the Nations, I attended an inter-faith service to pray for the many lost and injured in the tsunami. I believe that Jesus has an answer that Jesus offers a word of hope in the midst of that suffering and death and as I listened I heard words from each faith which resonated with the words of Jesus.

But for me Jesus' life and message are of universal importance and value — that he is the Light of the Nations — even though others don't see it!

And now this week we find Jesus:

on a mountain

delivering new commandments for life with God, and establishing a new people.

proclaiming blessed those who will live this way! —

Jesus' ministry in Matthew's gospel is described as reflecting the ministry of Moses — Jesus is the New Moses — the giver of the law.

Jesus is the New Prophet of God's people:

through water

into wilderness

gathered leaders together

now delivered the New Law on the mountain

Blessedness — the bliss of communion with God is as a result of an attitude which enables action.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

[* Blessed are *YOU* who are poor * Addressed to those who follow.]

The poor in spirit are not just those who are poor in worldly wealth.

but those who are aware of their total dependence, their utter helplessness their total lack of resources — and therefore their need of God.

Their attitude leads to an awareness and action!

We should not use this as an excuse for recognizing the needs of the world's poor.

poor in money

poor in resources

poor in terms of freedom etc.,

The World Economic Forum at present is looking at the problem of poverty and we need to look again at Jesus' call in this policy speech.

That his people are to:

exercise power — BUT NOT BE POWERFUL

to show greatness — BUT NOT BE GREAT

to dominate — through gentleness, honesty and service.

Yesterday, two men came looking for accommodation because of a dispute with family members. He was awaiting unemployment benefit.

So they were in a spot because of
poor manager
poor relationship skills

poor emotionally

They could have had a tent, but they wouldn't swallow enough pride to deal with other members of the family.

They could have gone to one of the refuges, but they could not forgive things that had happened there before.

I actually don't believe they were as monetarily poor as those affected by the tsunami. Better value in the Tsunami Appeal or Alhi Arab hospital...

and their attitude showed they had not even considered their blessings; they could not swallow their pride!

Well, I got them to do a little work and paid for some accommodation — [\$20 at Kingston Hotel] But I really would have like to help them deal with their attitude.

I also became aware of my resentment toward them. I became aware that my attitude prevented me from knowing total dependence/reliance on God.

WE ALL NEED TO LEARN IT!

In the Micah reading, God laments the failures of his people!

With all that they had received they could offer

sacrifices

burnt offering

sheep

oil

even their firstborn for their redemption

But God calls them to look to offering *themselves*

TO DO JUSTICE

LOVE KINDNESS

WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD.

Humility is not weak passivity.

do justice

love kindness

walk humbly.

The psalm also examines the attitudes of those who "may dwell in God's holy tabernacle and abide upon your holy hill" referring to those who come to the Temple to offer sacrifice or to pray — I wonder in another way if it might refer to those who were the priests who ministered in the Temple.

There is the reference to the right use of money:

— **Not** for gain,

— or bribery

In the 1Corinthians reading, Paul points to the lowliness and foolishness of Jesus' self offering and reminds his hearers of their own lowliness. (v27)

(v28) God chose what is lowly and despised in the world — things that are not — to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one can boast in the presence of God.

Our journey through Epiphany reveals Jesus as the giver of a new law and reminds us of our own helplessness, our own poverty and our dependence and need of God.