

**THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

Text: St. Luke 2:41-52

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

The season of Epiphany is a season of revelation. But revelation does not carry much weight if what is revealed is not made manifest. What is revealed during this season is not to be confused with a magician's sleight of hand or some sort of religious or cultic obfuscation. Nor is it a winsomely romantic story meant to make us feel warm emotions as we are filled again and again with the so-called holiday "spirit" (whatever that might mean) once every twelve months of the year. What *is* revealed is a piercing light that cuts through the darkness of our fallen nature and makes manifest the truth that JESUS is the only-begotten SON of God, and therefore, is God Himself, in human flesh. He is God with us, and He has come to save us!

Thus, we celebrate the season of Epiphany as God reveals His presence among men, manifesting His glory among us in the flesh of the Man, JESUS, "*full of grace and truth.*" Indeed, every word and act uttered by JESUS, as revealed in the accounts of His life and ministry in the Holy Gospels, is for one great purpose and that purpose alone: "*these are written that you may believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.*" To read Scripture in any other way, to understand Holy Scripture in any other light, to assign any other meaning to JESUS and His ministry, is to walk away from CHRIST, to leave Him in the Temple of Jerusalem, to cling to the Law and cast away the Good News of the forgiveness of sin in the SON of God, whose business is that of His FATHER, and His FATHER's business is your salvation.

So, we are gathered here, in our FATHER's house, we, the business of God, with JESUS at the center. Where else is one to find JESUS? For we are the One Holy Christian and Apostolic Church—a temple not made with the hands of men but with Water and the Spirit, the Flesh and Blood of CHRIST, and the Word of God. Do not seek Him anywhere else, for if you do, the JESUS you find will not be the Son of God but a god of your own imagination, or even worse, the seed of Satan.

Instead, to find JESUS, one must look to where He has promised He can be found—water, Word, Flesh, and Blood—preaching and the Holy Sacraments. These are the places where one will find JESUS because these are the means by which He accomplishes the business His FATHER has set out for Him to do.

This means that JESUS *is not* found in the things of this world which some would love to bring into His Holy Temple. He is not here to entertain or to make you feel good; He is not here to provide you your best life now; He is here to forgive you—to give you life and salvation. Jesus *is* found in the Holy Liturgy, where He speaks to us in and with His own Words, and gives to us, as our Servant King and Almighty God, faith, forgiveness of sin in holy absolution, and eternal life. JESUS does not wish to be worldly. Nor does He wish to be found in worldly things, but in the things of His FATHER, doing the business of His FATHER.

Therefore, JESUS is not your divine accountant who teaches you how to manage your money. He is not your divine babysitter who teaches you how to raise your family. He is not your divine marriage counselor who teaches you how to get along with your spouse. He is not your divine coach or cheerleader who helps you do your “J-E-S-U-S” very best. He is not your divine guru who sends you home with warm feelings and happy thoughts. And He certainly is not your divine entertainer.

JESUS is, now and always, your SAVIOR. He hears you when you pray for the forgiveness of your sins. He answers you with His Word of absolution pronounced to you through his servant, your Pastor. He again hears your plea for mercy in the Kyrie, and we return thanks for all He has done to save us in the Gloria in Excelsis. We hear of His compassion and mighty works through His Holy Word and preaching, and we receive a tangible sign of His promise of forgiveness in the Sacrament of the Altar where we are given the same Body and Blood He gave for us on the Cross.

JESUS is not anything if it does not have to do with your eternal salvation through His Blood-bought reconciliation with His FATHER in Heaven. JESUS *is* your SAVIOR. He *is* your LORD and your God. This *is* His necessary business because it *is* His FATHER’s will.

This, then, is what the Church must preach. This is the necessary work of the Church and Her servants. For I ask you, if the Church does not give the people JESUS, what does she have to offer? If we bring things of the world into the sanctuary and pass them off as things of God, are we not looking in all the wrong places for our LORD? Are we not telling those who worship within the walls of the Temple that JESUS is not to be found here, that He is to be looked for outside these walls, outside the Church, and outside His Word? If we do not preach Jesus Christ for the life of the world, then we have nothing that the world cannot give, and we are no better than the money changers Jesus cast out of the temple.

So, come now, and let us join JESUS in the Temple. Stop looking for Him anywhere but where He has promised to be. Come to His holy altar where He is about the business of His FATHER as He serves you, feeding your soul with life, faith, and

salvation in His very Body and Blood. We have cried out in our need and God has heard us and directed us here to receive the forgiveness of our sins. For this is where we receive the benefits of the business of the FATHER made possible through His SON, and made known through the sending of the HOLY SPIRIT—the business JESUS carried to completion in His Body on a cross outside Jerusalem.

Come now and lay your sins at the feet of JESUS as you enter into His presence in His holy house. *He* has sought *you* out and found you. In finding you, He has given you the gift of faith. In the gift of faith, He has given you the gift of eternal life with Him and His FATHER through His SPIRIT.

JESUS has given you the one thing necessary, the one thing needful. He said, *“I must be about My FATHER’s business.”* His FATHER’s business is none other than your salvation through the crucifixion of His SON. Jesus has completed the FATHER’s business. He completed it on Calvary’s holy mountain. The proof is found in an empty tomb. The necessary thing has been completed and JESUS declares this truth to you when He says, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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