

## EPIPHANY: A TIME TO CELEBRATE GOD'S GIFT FOR ALL PEOPLE

**Third Sunday after the Epiphany**

**January 27, 2008**

**Isaiah 9:1-4**

**Psalm 27:1, 4-9**

**1 Corinthians 1:10-18**

**Matthew 4:12-23**

### **Walk in the Light!**

*In a stable bare  
Lay a little babe so fair,  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
And a shining star  
Led the wise men from afar,  
Alleluia, alleluia!*

Excerpted from an Old English Carol

Can you imagine the excitement of the wise men as they followed the light of the star for months cross country and finally found the treasure it heralded? While that luminary marker was certainly significant, it did not outshine the true light to which it pointed...Jesus!

This week's readings remind us why it was important for Jesus to come to earth—to bring light and salvation to a world that walked in darkness. The Gospel writer recalls what the prophet Isaiah foretold:

“Listen Galilee, land of the Gentiles!  
Although your people live in darkness,  
they will see a bright light.  
Although they live in the shadow of death,  
a light will shine on them.” (Matthew 4:15b, 16, *CEV*)

In fulfillment of ancient prophecy, and as God revealed in human flesh, we see Christ, the promised Messiah, coming to banish sin, darkness, and death that plague our lives and giving himself as a sacrifice so that we might have eternal life. Another Gospel writer summarizes our relationship to Christ and puts it this way: “Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone” (John 1:3b, 4, *CEV*).

Although the light shines on us, we do have the choice of walking in or moving away from the light. Sadly, today, more than 2,000 years after God's “Light” came into the world, many have shunned the true Light and still walk “in the land of darkest shadows” (Isaiah 9:2b) using self-made, artificial lights of pride and egotism for their journey.

Somehow we lose the revelation of God in Christ Jesus when we step out of the light. Our focus becomes fuzzy and our plans, though well-intentioned, miss the mark. Our lives proceed at a frenetic pace and our walk with God becomes much like the church in Laodicea, neither “cold nor hot” (Revelation 3:15, *CEV*). It is then that we risk being admonished by God, “You claim to be rich and successful and to have everything you need. But you are pitiful, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17, *CEV*). Indeed, without God’s light we *are* pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. But, as we allow ourselves to be wrapped in the light of God, we can confidently say with the psalmist, “You, LORD, are the light that keeps me safe” (Psalm 27:1a, *CEV*) and we can sing joyfully with hymn writer Eliza E. Hewitt:

*How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
Stepping in the light, stepping in the light;  
How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
Led in paths of light.*

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

+ + +

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Paraguay** – With thanks to God that his Word already exists in many indigenous languages, and with prayers that indigenous people will know the God who made and loves them and that they will find the strength to lead an honorable life, and with prayers for the welfare of Paraguay’s people; **Bolivia** – With thanks to God for maintaining democracy in the country and with prayers that government policies do not affect freedom of worship or the distribution of Scriptures and that the young continue to have access to Christian education, and with prayers for the launch of the New Testament in North Quechua and for the progress of the Aymara Study Bible which will take five years; **Peru** -- With thanks to God for Scriptures in more than 50 languages, for new products, increased Bible distribution, the theater production of Mark’s Gospel, and the breakfast-and-Scripture ministry to poor children, and with prayers for interconfessional work with the Catholic Church and the evangelical Churches, and for funds for the revision of the Ayacucho Quechua Bible.

**Activity Corner:** “Shining Star”

Supplies needed: Bible; yellow 8-1/2 x 11 construction paper; star pattern; pens or pencils; scissor; Bible concordance.

Using a sheet of construction paper, trace and cut out a star. On one side, copy Matthew 5:16. On the other side, write down ways you will “walk in the light” throughout the week and reflect the light of God’s love. With members of your household, discuss how you will “let your light shine.” Using a Bible concordance, look up the word “light” and read some other Bible verses that contain the word “light.” Conclude by singing “This Little Light of Mine” or one of your favorite hymns.

