

An Enlightening Realization

Ephesians 3:1-12

Introduction

We're told that **epiphany** means *manifestation* or *appearance*. The last day of the Christmas season is called **Epiphany** because our focus is on how the Babe of Bethlehem was made manifest or shown to be the Son of God to the world. The Gospel lesson for Epiphany is always **Matthew 2:1-12**, the story of the Magi from the east. These wise men, sort of a combination of philosopher and scholar, have come to worship "*he who has been born King of the Jews*" (v. 2). Being foreigners, most likely from Babylon, these men represent all the world as they worship Jesus. In worshipping Him, they acknowledge Him as not only King of the Jews, but God. For only God is worthy of our worship. But, at its root, **epiphany** can also be an *enlightening realization* or a *revelation*, such as the realization that "I could have had a V-8!"

Epiphanies Change Lives

In looking at an epiphany as a **revelation**, we see that *epiphanies change lives*. You could say that I'm a member of the LC-MS as a result of two epiphanies. At **Northern Baptist Theological Seminary**, I was introduced to the **Ancient church** and thus the **fathers, creeds** and **liturgy**. I had an epiphany that this is the **sound doctrine** I had been searching for all my life and wanted to connect with it. When I started going to **Faith** and learned about the LC-MS, I had an epiphany that this is the one church today that still teaches what the Ancient church believed, taught and confessed. And in a nutshell, that's why I'm a Lutheran. These epiphanies *drastically changed my life*.

The Mystery of This Epiphany (Eph. 3:6)

(Read **Ephesians 3:6**). We're dealing with a mystery here. Paul says that the mystery is that the Gentiles are now *fellow heirs* and *members of the body* of Christ. Christianity began as a sect of Judaism. But God has opened salvation to the world. This is an epiphany, an "aha" moment, if you will. This changes everything. Luther cites this verse in his **Explanation of the Small Catechism** in the discussion on the **Third Article of the Apostles' Creed**. According to the **Catechism**, *the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith*. We see here, the Holy Spirit at work in **Justification** and **sanctification**.

The Spirit Calls Us to Faith—Justification

The Holy Spirit *calls, gathers* and *enlightens* us. This is how the Spirit works faith in us. He **gets our attention** and **calls** us to Christ. This is the same thing as **vocation**. God calls us to where He wants us to be. The whole process begins with God. It's His will that we are saved. **Enlightening** us is **making us aware** of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for us and lives and giving us the faith to believe that He did it *for me*. This is our **epiphany**, our **enlightening realization**. He **gathers** us into the church as **members of the body of Christ**. We are family, as we are **adopted** as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit is the One who works this in our lives. God has determined that we are to be here, given us insight, and hence, faith and brought us here to be His church in Dyer, IN.

The Spirit Keeps Us in the Faith

The Holy Spirit **sanctifies** and **keeps** us. Having worked faith in us and bringing us together through the forgiveness of sins, He **sanctifies** us in the **church**, the **communion of the saints**. Why is church important? According to the **Creed**, it's where the Holy Spirit does the work of sanctifying us or setting us apart for God's work. He makes us the holy people of God. He *keeps us in the one true faith*. We talked New Year's Eve about how nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. the Holy Spirit is the One who keeps us in His love.

Through the Means of Grace

He accomplishes all this through the **Means of Grace**.

The Word

Faith comes by hearing. When we **hear** the **Word of God**, the Spirit works faith in us as He gives us the **enlightening realization** that Jesus is the Son of God who died for us and lives for us.

Baptism

When infants are **baptized**, the Holy Spirit works faith in them, so they are saved. When adults come to faith through the Word, the Holy Spirit **seals the deal**, so to speak, in **Baptism**.

Communion

When we receive **Holy Communion**, the Holy Spirit, through the **body** and **blood** of Jesus, continues to work faith in us and sanctify us, **keeping** us in the faith to live for Jesus. This is the epiphany that is the **life-changing enlightening realization**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
