

Sermon Notes – January 11, 2026
The Holy Gospel of St. Matthew 2: 13-15
Peace Lutheran Church
“Jesus is Reveal”

Epiphany has its origins in the Eastern church, focusing not simply on the visit of the magi but also on the various beginnings of Jesus' ministry - His incarnation, His baptism, and His first “sign” (John 2: 11) at the marriage feast at Cana. In the Western church these stories have spread out into the Sundays of the Time after Epiphany, fitting well with the theme of that season - the manifestation (which is the literal meaning of *epiphany* as Jesus' authority becomes evident in powerful ways). The Sunday immediately after Epiphany focuses on His baptism, when He begins His earthly ministry, accompanied by God's acclamation and the Spirit's descent. Matthew's story of the baptism fits in well with two of His central themes: fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus as God-with-us, and Jesus is baptized not to be cleansed but to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3: 15); thus, it is an expression of His deep connection with us who *do* need to be cleansed and who are baptized.

Epiphany was, especially for the early church in Egypt, the central time for baptisms. Rather than seeing our baptism (as Paul did) primarily linked to Jesus' Passover from death into life, these Christians saw it primarily (as the Gospel writers?) as the entry into a life of service following Jesus' example - in both cases an identification with Jesus, but with different emphases. The reading from Isaiah fits in well with the Egyptian notion. It describes not only the ministry that began with Jesus' baptism, but also the ministry that begins with our own. It is this understanding that underlies the promises to which we recommit in the Affirmation of Baptism: “to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace. These others are important parts of our commitment to follow the Lord of our life.

That connection, between Jesus' ministry and our own, is echoed once again in the reading from Acts. Here it is connected with yet another theme of Epiphany (which is shared with Pentecost); the manifestation of Christ's power beyond boundaries of nation and culture. Not only does Peter tell the story of Jesus' baptism and healing ministry, but he tells it in the context of the gospel spreading beyond Israel to the gentiles, with the baptism of Cornelius and his household.