

Redwoods Presbyterian Church
Larkspur, California
December 1, 2013

Isaiah 11:1-2, Luke 2:1-7, Luke 2:8-16,
John 1:1-4, Mark 16:1-6
First Sunday of Advent Homily

The first Sunday of 2014, January 5, will precede the liturgical event called "Epiphany of the Lord."

The dictionary definition of Epiphany states that it is a Christian festival held on January 6 in honor of the coming of the three kings to the infant Jesus Christ; a moment in which you suddenly see or understand something in a new or very clear way. It is an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being. It is usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something; an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking; an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure.

On January 5, we will listen to the biblical story of the Epiphany and we will once again hear an exposition of T. S. Eliot's brilliant poem, "Journey of the Magi."

Since we have just heard a scriptural version of "The Story of Salvation," a format I inherited when I came to Redwoods, and it ends with death and resurrection I shall read the final lines of Eliot's poem. It is a reflection by one of the Magi about his trip to Bethlehem.

He states:

"All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we lead all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death."

That's the story of salvation. It is death to all that does not satisfy; death to gods that consume us, that take life out of us; death to despair, hopelessness and

joylessness; death to unhelpful stress and worry; death to social policies that demean and hurt those who need help most.

We know what hurts and oppresses us. God helps us to see and God desires that we claim wisdom and understanding spoken of in Isaiah, peace and joy spoken in Luke, life and light spoken in John, and resurrection in Mark.

God bless us as we journey through this Advent, Christmas and Epiphany.
Amen.