

It might be one of the most remarkable texts in all of the Bible. There are so many events that take place and so many different characters and motives that happen in these 12 verses. It's honestly a little bit overwhelming. And in this text of the Epiphany, we're going to try to distill all these things down, to hammer home the truths that are given to us in God's Holy Word. And how should we do that? Well, today, we're going to go about it in a Sesame Street fashion. If I were to ask you, "What letter best describes Epiphany"? What would you say? I am here today to try to convince you that "W" is the best letter to describe Epiphany. So let's begin, Epiphany, brought to you by the letter "W."

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem."

These events took place sometime after Jesus was born when the Magi from the east began to follow a star and come to the palace of King Herod. Often they are referred to as the "Wise Men." But that's not our first W. The first W is not for who they were but for what they were doing. "W" is for Wanderer. We don't know exactly where they have come from; most likely, they came from Babylon, some 1700 miles away. They must have been studying the stars because they noticed a special one, and again, unknown to us how they have found out that this star was an indication of the King of the Jews being born. For all of the glory of their professions, the service of their master, they understood that there was something that was missing. So here they are, wandering around following a strange star through the desert, thousands of miles from home, in the hopes of finding the true King.

But they stumbled across a different King in that palace: ***"When King Herod heard this, He was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with Him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born."***

Our second "W" is for wicked. Herod was not pleased with the news of these wanderers. Herod knew who this "King of the Jews" was a reference to and was not about to have this King causing trouble for him and his kingdom. Jerusalem is scared, too, because they know that this man has a temper. He had no qualms about killing people, even his own family, as a way of making sure that his grip on the rule of the nation was kept firm. His wickedness is evidenced in a sinister plot of, which we learned last week. Where Herod put up a false piety in order that he could kill this child before anything ever comes of this King. He was so wicked that he ended up ordering the killing of all the baby boys in the region under two years.

But there's another "W" that we need to consider. It's one of those that is at the heart of Epiphany. "World." Epiphany is the time that we focus on the world. Epiphany is the time when God's prophecy in Isaiah comes fulfilled, where the Messiah is revealed not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles. Where salvation is broadcast in miraculous fashion to these foreigners, who were so far away and are led to the Christ-child. The small light in the sky led these Magi to the true light of the world, Jesus, who takes away the sins of the world. God led the world to salvation, wrapped in such an unassuming form.

What should be our fourth "W"? Well, I think there is none other than that which describes the entire ordeal. "Wondrous." ***"they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh."***

What a wondrous end to the story. The Magi begin their trek once again. And the star once again appears. Not only that, but this special star goes on ahead of them; it moves and stops over the house where the child Jesus was. Here what a wonder. The King is not in a palace in Jerusalem but in a small house. The King is not a large and domineering figure but a boy held in the arms of a woman of low stature.

But this does not stop the wonder and excitement of the Magi; they rejoiced and fell down at the feet of a child. Those who were used to being the presence of Royalty are overjoyed to be in the house of a small village. Those who are used to speaking with elder statesmen fall on their faces in worship to a child. Those who bring gifts to foreign dignitaries open their treasures to a boy who can only receive them through the means of his human parents.

And being warned in a dream, they return home by another route. What a wondrous story. The miracle of the star, the long journey, the finding of the Christ child, and a safe return home. Through means of a miracle, God brings people from so far away to the Savior, where they come to the humble Savior and the one who takes away their sins and grants them eternal life.

But what does Epiphany, what do the "W's" have to do with me? Well, a lot more than you might think. Because Epiphany, the "W's" are for you.

Because all of us, were or are wanderers. Before the time that we came to faith, we were all hopelessly stranded, looking and searching for something. Something that had meaning. Something that could be the purpose in our lives, something that could fill the hole that was there. And no matter where else you could look, there was still a need for the King of the Jews.

All of us were more than Wanderers; we were wicked. Not only unable to find God but enemies of him. Seeing the king of the Jews as a threat to us and to our sinful lives. God and everything that he is, is a threat to us as sinners. We hated everything about him, unable to come to him or love him. Everything in our natural sinful condition wanting to destroy and be done with him.

But just like the magi, we are also part of the third W. The Messiah was revealed to the gentiles to the entire world. ***“For God so loved the world, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*** And that includes you, as part of the world; Jesus was revealed so that all, everyone who believes in him could have eternal life.

And oh, how wondrous is our story too. Because by some miracle, so different than a moving star on the horizon, but no less miraculous, God brought you and me to himself. By means of a miracle of the sacrament of Holy Baptism, with the sprinkling of Water connected to the word, God brought you as a wandering wicked enemy to himself. He changed your heart and brought you into his family. Through that miracle, humble on its outward appearance, God brought to you himself.

Through God’s Holy Word, the Gospel, the news about your Savior Jesus Christ, God performs a wondrous miracle where through words on a page that you read, or words that you hear with your ears, he strengthens your faith—giving you the strength to continue to do battle against the sinful nature, the world, and your sinful flesh. Giving you comfort that no other words in this world can provide.

Through Holy Communion, by some miracle, your Savior himself is present in a small piece of bread and a tiny sip of wine. And through that meal, so seemingly insignificant in its form, God brings you to himself as he gives you the very forgiveness of sins that provides relief to the sin-sick and wearied soul. Yes, for you and I, as Christians of the world today, our story is wondrous as well.

I hope that today, I have convinced you that Epiphany can be very well described by the letter W. But I hope all the more that those W’s of the Epiphany story show

you that the Epiphany account is for you. We were wanderers; we, by sin, were wicked. But God revealed his salvation to the World. And by some wondrous miracle, you and I are saved by Jesus. I pray that the truths of the Epiphany, brought to you by the letter W, will continue to keep you and strengthen you. Amen.