

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

January 8, 2023

Epiphany Sunday



Sharing the journey  
to know, love, and serve

*Note Due to an attendee's temporary medical situation,  
only a small portion of the sermon was presented.*

**Welcome** to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship by reading this service script. This is Epiphany Sunday. Epiphany means arrival and celebrates is the wise men arriving to see Jesus, but what might be the deeper meaning of this event?



## **Affirmation Music      This I Believe (The Creed)**

Words and Music: Ben Feilding and Marr Crocker  
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Our Father everlasting, the all-creating One, God Almighty.  
Through your Holy Spirit, conceiving Christ the Son, Jesus, the Savior.

### Chorus

I believe in God the Father, I believe in Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection, that we will rise again.  
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

-- ♪ --

Our Judge and our Defender, suffered and crucified, forgiveness is in you.  
Descended into darkness, you rose in glorious life, forever seated high.

### Chorus

I believe in you. I believe you rose again. I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.  
I believe in life eternal, I believe in the virgin birth.  
I believe in the saints' communion and in your holy church.  
I believe in the resurrection, when Jesus comes again.  
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

- ♪ -

For I believe in the name of Jesus.  
For I believe in the name of Jesus

## Opening Prayer

Lord, you gave us the gift of a Savior for all people. Every gift given from the heart is blessed by you, and every act that proclaims your love brings joy to you. May the gifts that we offer and the love we proclaim in Christ's holy name - by resource, word, or action -- be pleasing to you. As the new year continues to dawn, we gather to be led to you by Jesus Christ, the ever-rising star and light of your world. And it is in his name that we pray, Amen.

## Call to Worship

Like the Magi long ago, we come to celebrate the radiance in Christian hearts, for the Everlasting God brought the nations to his light and kings to the brightness of his rising. Come to experience God showing himself to the nations and filling the world with his glory -- through Jesus Christ who is the true light and the bright and morning star. (ad from Latin Sacramentary, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c., alt. in UM Book of Worship)

**Special Instrumental Music** On Epiphany, the magi came and offered their gifts which had multiple purposes, but the emphasis we get from the hymn is that gold represented Christ's kingship, frankincense (often burned as an aroma in worship) represented his divinity, and myrrh, a perfume used with other spices in embalming, representing his sacrificial death – and then the song concludes with rising from the stone-cold tomb as King, and God and sacrifice, we worship him. Donna and Kathy are going to play that song for us. **We Three Kings**



## Intro to Reading



Lay Reader: We heard their story musically. The lyric also mentions that chasing the Christmas star was a long trip. It is not observed until 12 days after Christmas (January 6). The celebration of Epiphany has been around longer than Christmas, and it originally focused on the nativity, birth, and baptism of Christ. Today the emphasis has moved to the Magi, or wise men, or the kings arriving with their gifts. This celebration has been preserved and developed in most Latin American cultures in what they call Three Kings Day, or Day

of the Kings. In worship, they use drama and special songs to relive the story of the magi and their gift giving --- like we did a few weeks ago... And at home, children are told to put hay under their beds so the traveling camels can eat the hay while the kings leave presents for the children.

(Synopsis from UM Book of Worship)

Let's remind ourselves of some of the key points of the Magi's story as Matthew tells it.

### **Bible Reading**

Lay Reader: Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in the country of Judea. Herod was the king. After Jesus was born, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, 'Where is the child who has been born to be King of the Jews? We saw his star rising and we have come to worship him.' ... the star, which they had seen rising, went in front of them. It stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were very glad. They went into the house, and there they saw the child and Mary his mother. They kneeled down and worshipped him. Then they opened their bags and gave him gifts. These gifts were gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-2, 9b-11 (WE)

### **Music**

The intent is to convey through the magi event that they knew this was not just any ordinary king that would ascend to a Jewish throne – this was going to be a unique, special king who would draw all the nations to himself, which is why they were traveling so far to bring their gifts and worship. So just who was this baby Jesus and what kind king would he grow up to be? He was the one the prophets spoke of -- the powerful things that he would be and do, a light of hope dawning in the darkness of despair, a lion king who created and rules over nature and nations, a warrior who stands with those who are oppressed and frees them from whatever or whoever enslaves them, one who answers the troubled when they call, a sacrificial lamb that brings healing to the hurting. It is no wonder his name was Jesus – which means Savior.



## Jesus

Words and Music: Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash  
© 2016 Worship Together Music

There is a truth older than the ages.  
There is a promise of things yet to come.  
There is one born for our salvation, Jesus.

There is a Light that overwhelms the darkness.  
There is a kingdom that forever reigns.  
There is freedom from the chains that bind us.  
Jesus, Jesus.

### Chorus

Who walks on the waters, who speaks to the sea.  
Who stands in the fire beside me.  
He roars like a Lion. He bled as the Lamb  
He carries my healing in His hands, Jesus.

There is a name I call in times of trouble.  
There is a song that comforts in the night.  
There is a voice that calms the storm that rages.  
He is Jesus, Jesus.

### Chorus

Messiah, My Savior, there is power in Your name.  
You're my rock and my Redeemer, there is power in Your name,  
in Your name.

### Chorus

God, You walk on the waters, You speak to the sea,  
You stand in the fire beside me.  
You roar like a lion, You bled as the Lamb,  
You carry my healing in Your hands.  
Jesus, there is no one like You.  
Jesus, there is no one like You.

**Music** Peter writes that because of his experience [especially witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain], that

we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets.

{Then your light, your salvation, will burst forth like the morning dawn, and your healing will appear quickly...

| Let your light shine for all to see. For the glory of the Lord rises to shine on you. Darkness as black as night covers all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the Lord rises and appears over you. All nations will come to your light, mighty kings will come to see the brightness of your rising. |

...and the glory of the Lord will protect you. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer, "Here I am."}

[We] must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19 (NLT) with inserted portions from {Isaiah 58:8-9 (NLT, CJB, WEB)} and {Isaiah 60:1-3 (NLT, WEB)}

We still need to see his light rising more and more in our hearts and in world, so as the Magi continue follow the risen star on their journey to Bethlehem to see the light of the world, let's also rise to our feet as comfortable and sing this "traveling song" Let it Rise.

### **Let it Rise**

Words -Music Holland Davis, arr. by Lura Foster  
© 1997 Maranatha Praise, Inc.:

#### Chorus

Let the glory of the Lord rise among us,  
Let the glory of the Lord rise among us.  
Let the praises of the King rise among us, let it rise.  
Let the songs of the Lord rise among us,  
let the songs of the Lord rise among us.  
Let the joy of the King rise among us, let it rise.  
Oh—let it rise. Oh, let it rise.

Let the glory of the Lord rise among us,  
Let the glory of the Lord rise among us.  
Let the praises of the King rise among us, let it rise.  
Oh--- let it rise. Oh--- let it rise. Oh--- let it rise.

#### Chorus

Oh--- let it rise. Oh--- let it rise.

**Music** The Magi have arrived, and as they enter, a holy hush fills the room as they see Jesus, and I wonder just how much they understood what they were seeing as they knelt with their gifts before him, perhaps even allowed to hold Jesus and gaze into his eyes as he looks back into their souls. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by reverently singing ("with the magi in that moment in that room") the song Offering.

### Offering

Words and Music: Paul Baloche arr by Lura Foster  
© 2003 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

The sun cannot compare to the glory of your love;  
there is no shadow in your presence.  
No mortal man would dare to stand before your throne,  
before the Holy One of Heaven.  
It's only by your blood, and it's only through your mercy, Lord, I come.

I bring an offering of worship to my King.  
No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing.  
Jesus, may you receive the honor that you're due.  
O Lord, I bring an offering to you.

(Repeat)

I bring an offering of worship to my King.  
No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing.  
I bring an offering of praises to my King.

**Pastor's Prayer** Almighty Father, Matthew's wise men invite us to remember Jesus Christ's compassionate, gracious life and to offer him our honor, glory, and praise, for he offers forgiveness of sin and deliverance from its power. We learn from the wise men that you reveal yourselves to those who seek you. You bend low and show yourself to us so that we can find you. You surround us with clues to your presence. Your creation speaks to us night and day.

We confess that often we resolve to start the task, the journey to seek and find you and experience your light and glory once again, but along the way we are tempted to think the journey is too long or too hard... sometimes even doubting your goodness, your power, or your care. We allow darkness to overwhelm and discourage us.

Yet Epiphany and the new year echoes your invitation to fresh starts. Help us to rebuild our lives and your world by following your will. Reveal yourselves to us again that we again offer ourselves in heart felt worship, that your life and light will burst forth before us and overwhelm us with joy. For we are confident that you rule

over all. We recognize the value of your wise leadership and apply it to our lives. Through your guidance, we discover clarity for life. You watch over our lives with compassion. **Praises and Petitions** Therefore, we continues lift up Pat Schleh who continues rehab from her broken pelvis, \* Cheri Holt's cousin's sister Clare and her family, as she has metastasized cancer. \* for Jan Matin's brother Reese Thornton, \* and for those who are not feeling well for whatever reason, \* and Gary Sunderland, those people and events we have not named, that they as well as all of us may be touched by your grace, your guidance, your comfort, and your moral strength, and your healing, according to your will and timing. Restore us to shalom.

Now continue to guide us on the path of salvation, that the radiance and power of your Holy Spirit may work in us and in the world, gathering together all peoples and nations in one community that offers ourselves to you in worship and proclaims your splendor, even in the prayer you taught us to pray. **LORD's PRAYER**

**Music** The magi have now offered their generous gifts at his feet, gifts that they may now realize are small, and will never earn his favor or repay the cost of what this king will do for them. Humbled before this child to be king, they conclude their visit and begin making their way home, their hearts bursting with uncontainable joy, marveling at the thought that God himself would love us so much that he would enter our world to be with us, pay the price for our problems, and free us from everything that binds us. Let's sing God with us.

### **God With Us**

Words and Music: Jim Bryson, Nathan Cochran, Barry Graul,  
Bart Millard, Mike Scheuchzer, Robby Shaffer  
arr by Ken Barker © 2007 Simpleville Music/Wet as a Fish Music

Who are we that you would be mindful of us?  
What do you see that's worth looking our way?  
We are free in ways that we never should be.  
Sweet release from the grip of these chains.

### **Chorus**

Like hinges straining from the weight, my heart no longer can keep from singing.  
All that is within me cries, for you alone be glorified. Emmanuel, God with us.  
My heart sings a brand new song, the debt is paid, these chains are gone.  
Emmanuel, God with us.

Lord, you know our hearts don't deserve your glory.  
Still, you show a love we cannot afford.

### **Chorus**



Such a tiny offering compared to Calvary. Nevertheless we lay it at your feet.  
Such a tiny offering compared to Calvary. Nevertheless we lay it at your feet.

All that is within me cries, for you alone be glorified. Emmanuel, God with us.  
My heart sings a brand new song, the debt is paid, these chains are gone.  
Emmanuel, God with us.

## Intro to Bible Reading 2

Lay Reader: The story of God making himself known to the Gentiles concludes, but the full scope of its lesson is not always easy to learn and apply.

A God-fearing Gentile Roman army officer named Cornelius was praying. He envisioned an angel who told him that God has received his prayers and gifts to the poor as an offering, and to send some men to Joppa to fetch Simon Peter who is staying with a tanner named Simon who lives by the seashore. He immediately chose three people, informed them of the vision and their mission, and sent them. It is about a full day's walk. They were approaching the city about noon the next day.

The fact that Peter was staying with Simon the tanner is significant. Sometimes occupations are added to names to help distinguish them from other local people with the same name. But more importantly, Peter was staying with a man who had a profession that was despised because it included handling dead carcasses, which made a person "unclean" under Jewish law. This meant that Peter's faith had broadened somewhat beyond the restrictions of his upbringing. But he had a way to go.



Around noon, Peter was hungry. While the meal was being prepared, he went up on the flat rooftop to pray. He fell into a trance. He had a vision of heaven opening and a large sheet descending with all kinds of animals on it. A voice from heaven said, "Rise, kill, and eat." Peter refused, for he had never eaten anything that his upbringing said was impure and unclean (not kosher)."

The voice replied, "Don't call something unclean if God has made it clean." This vision happened three times. Then the sheet of animals suddenly returned to heaven. Peter was still puzzling over the meaning of this vision when men were calling for him at the gate of the house. The Spirit said to Peter, "Three men are looking for you, go with them without misgivings, because I have sent them."



Peter went down and greeted them. They said why they had come, and he invited them to stay for the night. The next day Peter and some others from Joppa went with the trio back to Caesarea. They arrived the following day. Cornelius had already gathered all of his relatives and close friends and were waiting for them. Peter said, "It is against my religious laws to enter a Gentile home or associate with you, but God has told me to not think of anyone as impure or unclean. Why did you send for me?"

Cornelius told the angelic vision (that we have heard); that he immediately sent for him, and that it was good of him to come. He concluded: "Now we are all in here in the presence of God to hear what the Lord has commanded you to say.

(Summary of Acts 10:1-33)

And you can imagine Peter looking over these unfamiliar but eager faces as we pick up the reading...

### **Bible Reading**

Lay Reader: Then Peter began to speak, "I really understand now. God does not play favorites. He does not love some people more than others. But he accepts anyone who [reveres] him and does what is right. It does not matter to what people they belong.

"To the people of Israel God has sent the good news announcing shalom through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all! You know what has happened throughout Judea. It started in Galilee after the baptism which John talked about; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Jesus went about doing good deeds. He healed all those who were oppressed by the Adversary because God was with him.

"We were witnesses of everything he did in the Judean countryside and in Jerusalem. They did away with him by hanging him on a piece of wood. But on the third day, God raised him up and let him be seen, not by all the people, but by witnesses God had previously chosen, that is, by us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from death.

"Then he commanded us to tell the people that God chose this man to judge the living and the dead. All the prophets bear witness to him. They say, "Everyone who puts their trust in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Acts 10:34-43 (WE, CJB)

## **Sermon Why Did They Come?**

Prior to Christmas, 5-year-old Randy wanted a toy western stagecoach as his gift. During a shopping trip with his mom, he found just the one he wanted. It was about 6" long and had cool wheels and dark brown plastic horses pulling it. "Mommy, I want this one. Pleeeeeease" he begged. He came near to throwing a tantrum, insisting that he get that stagecoach for Christmas. Mom finally closed the conversation with a "We'll see."

Randy was sure he'd get what he asked for. Christmas morning came, and he opened the package confidently. Sure enough, it was the stagecoach he had begged for. He was so pleased – until his older brother said, "You're stupid. Mom had already bought you a much bigger, much better stagecoach, but when you begged for that one, she exchanged it." Suddenly the small stagecoach didn't seem so appealing.

Pete went up for an afternoon prayer on the rooftop and I imagine he expected to experience what he usually experienced in his prayers. But this day, God had a whole different idea in mind, and prepared him to participate in helping launch a movement that would be incomprehensible to Peter. And even though it took a while, luckily, for all of us Gentiles, he listened and learned and reached out with God's message to people his lifelong learned traditions would have forbade. He wants to do so much more in this world than we ask or can possibly imagine.

We too may ask for too little in our prayers compared to what he may want to invite us to be and do as a part of in his work in the world. Can we continue to listen and learn?

**Prayer** Let's pray. Lord, we don't always know for what to ask for, what to pray for -- Even in Jesus day, they wanted survival, and felt they were dreaming big in asking for freedom from Rome. In that case, graciously, you didn't settle to give us what we asked, and instead you sent Jesus to offer us victory over death, give us eternal life, and a full life even now. Therefore, even if we don't know what to ask for, like Peter, teach us to listen and to cooperate with what you are telling us so that we can receive the gift that you want to give to us and through us to others, as Jesus lays that path out for us, and it is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

**Music** The wise men gazed at the child, and they saw a king that would draw all nations. He promised -- we heard it all the way back in Exodus (we heard this last summer) Moses saying as he was about to embark on his great mission – "Well

who should I tell them is sending me?” How are we going to make this big thing we can’t even imagine happen?” God said simply, “Tell them I AM who I AM” sent you. Meaning, “I will be there for you, I will be who you need me to be” and Jesus picked up on that same answer as he lived his life, saying, “I am... the Light, the Bread, the Shepherd, the Way...” the creator who sustains and rules over all principalities and powers above the earth, on the earth, and below the earth... None can stand before his power and presence, so let’s stand before our closing song. .

### **Great I AM**

Words and Music: Jared Anderson, arr by Charlie Sinclair  
© 2011 Integrity Worship Music

I want to be close, close to your side, so heaven is real and death is a lie.

I want to hear voices of angels above, singing as one:

Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM;

Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM.

I want to be near, near to your heart, loving the world and hating the dark.

I want to see dry bones living again, singing as one:

Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM;

Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM.

--- ♪ ---

The mountains shake before you, the demons run and flee

at the mention of the name, “King of Majesty,”

There is no pow’r in hell or any who can stand

before the power and the presence of the great I AM,

the great I AM, the great I AM, the great I AM, the great I AM, the great I AM,

Hallelujah, holy, holy, God Almighty, the great I AM;

Who is worthy, none beside Thee, God Almighty, the great I AM,

the great I AM. the great I AM. the great I AM.

(Repeat from “The mountains shake...”)

### **Blessing**

May God’s light always shine in your darkness. May your ears always hear the Word. May grace upon grace be yours and may the matchless glory of the Father’s only Son be known to you now and forever. Amen.