3rd Sunday of Epiphany (Year B)

'An Epiphany of Wonder'

I wonder if you have ever watched a baby or a young child exploring the world around them for the first time? There is a sense of wonder in everything that they see, touch, smell or hear, since everything is new to them. I sometimes think that as adults, we quickly lose that child-like sense of awe and wonder.

Albert Einstein, one of the greatest minds of all time was spot-on when he observed:

> Whoever is devoid of the capacity to wonder, whoever unmoved, whoever cannot contemplate or know the deep shudders of the soul in enchantment, might just as well be dead for he has already closed his eyes upon life.

The glory of God is there all around us. God's glory is revealed everywhere! How many of you like me, have been awestruck by some of the glorious sunrises and sunsets along our beautiful stretch of the Kent coastline? The artist JMW Turner, a one-time resident of Margate described them as "The loveliest in all Europe". Turner's eyes were open to take in the breathtaking sunrises, sunsets and moody seascapes and went on to vividly capture their beauty in his paintings.

Likewise, I am sure that many of you have visited Canterbury Cathedral just a few miles down the road and gazed in wonder at its magnificent architecture. All of it built without the aid of modern technology to specifically instill a sense of wonder to the beholder. Just imagine how it might have been for a medieval peasant visiting a cathedral for the first time. It would it dominated the skyline. Entering they would have immediately been drawn into a sense of the awesome presence of God.

Today lectionary readings for the 3rd Sunday of Epiphany all describe inspiring encounters in and through which the glory of God was revealed to a variety of individuals. In each case, a response is demanded.

Firstly, in our Old Testament lesson, we have Abram's encounter with King and priest Melchizadek of Salem from whom Abram received a blessing. Abram's response to Melchizadek's hospitality and blessing was to in return give him an offering amounting to a tenth of all the spoils gained in the recent war that he had been engaged in.

Then in our New Testament lesson from the Book of Revelation (Revelation 19:6-10) we see how John responded his vision of the host of heaven praising and exalting God as God's glory was revealed firstly in Christ the Lamb and secondly in a: special invitation to participate: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). The only true response to such an event was to fall on his feet and worship God.

Finally, in our gospel lesson (John 2:1-11), we have an account of the wedding at Cana in Galilee attended by Jesus, his mother Mary and his disciples. When the wine ran out at the wedding party, Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into fine wine. The consequence of this revelation or epiphany was his disciples believed in him (2:11).

God's glory continues to be revealed in many different ways. However, our heart, mind and eyes need to be wide open and if we are to witness these epiphanies more regularly. If As the poet John Milton wrote:

> Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, these transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.

If we have eyes that are open to see the manifold epiphanies that God is revealing minute by minute and minds and hearts that are open to receive, we will each witness the glory of God all the time. When we do, I suggest that the only response can be to gaze in awe and wonder and offer our thanks, praise and worship to Almighty God.

If we were gathering together physically, I would have suggested that we concluded the service by singing the words of this hymn:

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;

with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.

Rev Andrew Jacobson
24th January 2021