

# Sunday Sermon

**Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 – Epiphany Sunday**

*Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.10-15; Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12*

There are great hopes for the roll out of coronavirus vaccines in 2021, and the vaccines are a real and substantial cause for hope this year, indeed rejoicing. And yet we start the New Year with a sense of foreboding about the coming weeks and months. It's back to reality with a vengeance, after an already subdued Christmas break. There is a palpable feel of disappointment in the air.

In our first reading, Paul is writing from prison, but he is not depressed. Paul is in prison because he has upset some powerful religious people, and the Romans are worried that he is a troublemaker. The Romans were really not very keen on trouble makers, they like order and stability, and Paul should really have been very depressed. Because in his day there was no such thing as serving a term of imprisonment as a punishment in itself. Rather being in prison was a prelude to the real thing: a beating, or being sold into slavery, or death. Prison was just about stopping you running away.

But Paul is not depressed. He sees himself as suffering for the sake of a Gospel in which he deeply rejoices. He sees himself as sharing in the sufferings of Christ himself. And he rejoices, because the message of the Gospel is so life changing and so world changing. The feast of the Epiphany, which we celebrate today, is absolutely about this same life-giving message. Amid all the depression we may feel ourselves today, this light, the light of Christ, shines forth.

This is the light of the world that the Magi journeyed far to see. This is the light that the bright star symbolised. This is the light that God gives to everyone who places their faith and trust in Jesus. This is the light that sustains every Christian through hard times. This is the light that heals all our losses and disappointments, for it is the light of the love which is eternal. It is the true light that shines in the darkness, and which the darkness does not overcome.

We need this light; shining on us, in us, and on those around us. It is a light of peace and reconciliation: with ourselves, with God and with one another. It is a light of courage and determination: to stay the course and not to weaken. It is a light of going on loving and doing right and being kind, come what may. Of course, many of us are placing our hopes in the vaccines, and for good reason. But our peace, our hope, our strength, are not just in the science, they are in God: in the Word made flesh; in Jesus the light of the world.

We may well feel somewhat imprisoned ourselves in the coming weeks and months, even though we know freedom is coming in the shape of the vaccines. But in truth, freedom is already with us here and now, in Christ. Christians know that the light is already shining in the darkness. Paul discovered this in prison and rejoiced. So can we. Amen.

CJ. 03.01.21