

The Epiphany Sunday January 06, 2019

The Collect: O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1-6 read from the New International Version Bible

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

“Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.

Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

1 Give the King your justice, O God, * and your righteousness to the King's Son;

2 That he may rule your people righteously * and the poor with justice;

3 That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, * and the little hills bring righteousness.

4 He shall defend the needy among the people; * he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.

5 He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, * from one generation to another.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, * like showers that water the earth.

7 In his time shall the righteous flourish; * there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute, * and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts.

11 All kings shall bow down before him, * and all the nations do him service.

12 For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress, * and the oppressed who has no helper.

13 He shall have pity on the lowly and poor; * he shall preserve the lives of the needy.

14 He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, * and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

Epistle: Ephesians 3:1-12 read from the New Living Translation Bible

When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.

And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all

the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12 read from the New Revised Standard Version Bible

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On January 13th we remember Mary Slessor Missionary

Mary Mitchell Slessor was a British Presbyterian missionary to Nigeria. Once in Nigeria, because of her understanding of the native language and her bold personality Slessor gained the trust and acceptance of the locals and was able to spread Christianity while promoting women's rights and protecting native children. She is most famous for having stopped the common practice of infanticide of twins among the Ibibio people, an ethnic group in southeastern Nigeria. It was the belief that if a woman had twins one of them had to be a devil so the twins were left in the jungle in clay pots to die. Mary Slessor successfully fought against this practice of infanticide of twins at infancy, often by adopting them.

Mary Slessor was born on December 2nd 1848 in Gilcomston, Aberdeen, U.K. to a poor working-class family. Her mother was a devout Presbyterian who read each issue of the Missionary Record. Slessor developed an interest in religion and when she heard that David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer had died, she decided she wanted to follow in his footsteps.

Eventually, she applied to the United Presbyterian Church's Foreign Mission Board. Slessor, 28 years of age, red haired with bright blue eyes, was first assigned to the Calabar region in the land of the Efik people.

In August 1888, Slessor traveled north to Okoyong, an area where male missionaries had been killed. She thought that her teachings, and the fact that she was a woman, would be less threatening to the unreached tribes. For 15 years, Slessor lived with the Okoyong and the Efik people. She learned to speak Efik, the native language, and made close personal friendships wherever she went, becoming known for her pragmatism and humor. Slessor lived a simple life in a traditional house with Efiks. Her insistence on lone stations often led her into conflict with the authorities and gained her a reputation for eccentricity. However, her exploits were heralded in Britain and she became known as the "white queen of Okoyong". Slessor continued her focus on evangelism, settling disputes, encouraging trade, establishing social changes and introducing Western education.

In 1892, Slessor became vice-consul in Okoyong, presiding over the native court. In 1905 she

was named vice-president of the Ikot Obong native court. Slessor's health began to fail in her later years but she remained in Calabar, where she died in 1915.

Let us pray: Almighty God, whose will it is to be glorified in your saints, and who raised up your servant Mary Slessor to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. **Amen.**