

## “Undeniable”

### **Matthew 2:1-12**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus’ epiphany, which we observe today, is a monumental moment as He begins His life as the young Godman. Just as the shepherds came to the newborn Christ on Christmas, three kings of the east, wise men bearing great gifts, have come to acknowledge the Lord coming into the world. From Christmas night to nearly two years after His birth, the truth of His incarnation is undeniable. And that goes for Herod as well. Even he could not deny the truth of who had come into the world, but his acknowledgement was self-serving. He used the knowledge of where the Messiah was to be born in order to find the child and remove Him from the picture. He attempted to mislead the wise men into believing he sought to worship him the same as they did, but God is not mocked, and He delivered the wise men out of Herod’s deception. Because the truth of what has taken place is indeed undeniable.

Jesus Christ has come into the world, born of the virgin Mary, and has now been revealed to the whole world as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. No one’s denial of that makes it any less true. He is not just some kid that lives down the road that is just a good boy that everyone loves and gets along with him. He is the Messiah. Even Herod acknowledges that when he seeks the promised location of the Messiah’s birth. Likewise, the world today acknowledges the truth of Christ in their state of denial of His divine rule over all things. By the world seeking to take Christ out of the picture, they are undeniably affirming that He is exactly who He has been revealed to be. Scripture tells us plainly in our Epistle lesson this morning that the purpose of His revelation is, “to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God.” Christ has been revealed to us to show us that the mysteries hidden in God are found in Him, and that is where we will look to find the undeniable answers to all those who seek to deny Him.

Living in a state of denial is a reality for all too many people in the world today. I mean, take your pick when it comes to the things that the world has convinced itself are not evil, but good. Abortion, gender dysphoria, homosexuality, euthanasia, and on and on it goes. People live in a state of denial that what God has said is evil is in fact actually good. It’s not them and their sin that is the problem, but God and His intolerance that have taken their self-expression and freedom away from them. This isn’t anything new though. Just look at David in 2 Samuel 11-12. He commits adultery and murder, taking the wife of Uriah and then having him killed. And he continues to live in a state where

there is no repentance or remorse for what he has done. He even continues to judge others for their sins, whilst continuing to deny that there is anything in his own life of which he is to be ashamed. It isn't until Nathan comes to him and reveals the truth of his depravity that David sees that the state in which he now lives is undeniable.

Sin is undeniable. No matter the lengths to which we go to try and deny it, there is no getting rid of the stain we bear in our flesh. The world is constantly convincing us by the work of the devil that we aren't all that bad. Herod had himself convinced that he wasn't the bad guy. All he wanted to do, after all, is protect his throne and his kingdom from a potential usurper. But no matter how much society wants us to believe that they are the "good guys," the truth is that the body of sin which we all inhabit makes everyone of us the absolute worst. We are plagued with sin, and without the revelation of Jesus and His forgiveness that He will go to the cross to win for us, there is no hope for anyone. Without Christ, the world is lost to eternal death, and so the star shines over the place where the child dwells to lead us to repentance and the only source of salvation for mankind. And there is only one place where the truth of that is found—the Word of the Lord.

Scripture is undeniable. The truth of God's Holy Word is the source of all knowledge in this life. What God has revealed to us by the words of His chosen prophets, Apostles, and evangelists is not unable to be denied, for many in the world do in fact deny it, but it is indeed undeniably true. If we get anything about our faith from anywhere other than the revealed knowledge of Scripture, then it is not a part of the true faith. The revelation of Jesus to the wise men is no different than the revelation of Jesus to us in the Word of God and in the visible Word of His Sacraments. The Means of Grace are the star in the sky that we rejoice exceedingly over when we see it rest over the place where Jesus has promised to be. And by His Holy Word, He has told us where He will be in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." And so we gather together here around His promised means to see the child that is the undeniable Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.

The Church is undeniable. The true Church—the invisible Church—cannot be silenced or destroyed. The fellowship of all the saints gathered together as one body in Christ is the vehicle of the proclamation that the Lord has been revealed to all in the Christ child. The believers before the throne in heaven, the whole heavenly host, proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest," and so we proclaim the same in joyous unison. We proclaim along with them, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (Rev. 5:12)!" And the Church exists only because of the Lamb who was slain. We exist only because of the

blood that was shed upon the cross for the salvation of the world, and that blood belongs to the one to whom the wise men bring great gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

What He will do is undeniable. Even these three secular kings knew what He had come to do for the world. The gifts they bring are not random, and they are not without thought. The gold is brought to acknowledge His kingly office, to acknowledge His rule over all things as the King of the universe and God of very God. The frankincense is because of His intercession before our Father in heaven as our own High Priest, bringing our prayers before Him and pleading on our behalf before the altar of incense. The myrrh is a burial spice, brought before this young boy to acknowledge the sacrifice that He will make that leads to burial and resurrection. Each one of these gifts highlights what is revealed to us by the writer to the Hebrews in 8:3, “For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.” And what He has to offer is none other than His own flesh and blood. He is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Jesus is undeniable. His work for the salvation of the world is undeniable. His sacrifice for the sins of mankind is undeniable. He went to the cross, bearing the burden of sin that belongs to us and not Himself, and was raised up for our transgressions. By the blood He shed there upon that tree we have been reconciled to God and declared to be righteous for His sake. And that truth cannot be wished away or belittled by anyone saying that it can't be true. As those who have been claimed as sons of God, we cannot deny who Jesus has been revealed to be, and He has been revealed to us as the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and the Savior of the world. If anyone denies that truth, then they are denying their only hope of escaping the wrath of God when judgment comes on the clouds of heaven. Jesus says in Matthew 10:33, “But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

Jesus Christ, the One who has been revealed to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that “the Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you,” cannot be denied, for He is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Judge. As those who believe in the redemption offered to us in the forgiveness of sins, we must proclaim the truth of Christ. By the Gospel proclamation, the same proclamation Paul promises to the Gentiles, the whole world will come to the knowledge of the truth. Though many will reject that truth, they will not be able to say in the end that they didn't know, for even vile Herod knew the truth, but refused to acknowledge it. There is much evil in the world that seeks to overthrow the truth of the Gospel, and as those who are in the true Church, we proclaim the truth of what is undeniable in the Scripture.

The presence of the Christ—the revelation of God in the flesh—is an undeniable truth to all people. Whether the unbelieving world, like Herod, who seeks to destroy the truth of the Lord having come, or the believing world, like the Magi, seeking to honor Him and acknowledge His glory, the truth of His incarnation stands before all in the person of Jesus. We see Him revealed to us today in Word and Sacrament, and when the consummation of all things comes on the last day, the whole world, the living and the dead, will acknowledge Him as the Lord when He returns again in glory. His epiphany in time has shown us the glory of God, and in His eternal epiphany, we will not only see His glory, but we will experience it. It will surround us, and our entire being will spend eternity worshiping the Lord our God. That truth is undeniable, and is the blessed gift we have because of His unending grace and mercy, which has been revealed to us in the Epiphany of our Lord. Amen.