

Epiphany 2026 – Be Amazed: Come and See

A Sermon preached by Zac Klassen on January 4th, 2026 at Bloomingdale Mennonite Church

Good morning,

It is good to be together again today – to gather as a people in celebration of Jesus, whose life and ministry is God among us, the greatest gift – the foundational gift, in fact, that bestows all other gifts upon us, the church, that we may build each other up and seek the common good of our community and our world. One of the many gifts bestowed upon us by God through Jesus Christ is the gift of the story that guides the church – the story of the people of God through history and in particular the stories of Jesus that we have all come to call “scripture.” As I prepared to preach this sermon this morning, I found myself reflecting on the gift, not just of the scriptures generally, but of the scriptures as they are read spiritually. From the beginning of the Jesus movement, a “spiritual reading” of the scriptures was their practice - reading scripture with particular attention to the Spirit sent by God and by Jesus.

Reading scripture “spiritually” is very different than reading scripture intellectually. While reading scripture with our intellect is a practice that is worthy on its own – studying scripture to understand its historical context, its history of interpretation, the possible authors and sources behind it, etc., the earliest Christians didn’t come to the text with these ends immediately in mind. While they read with their intellects active, they also read believing that God was going to speak to them through the Spirit, transforming and inspiring them and those around them. And so, this practice has continued on through history. It has been a gift that future generations of Christians have opened as they’ve read the scriptures, with their various characters and events, as not just past historical realities, but as active now in our present. Ancient Christian theologians writing biblical commentaries would thus point to characters in stories and say, “Is this not us?”

Are we not the Shepherds working long days and longing for good news to break through the night? Are we not Simeon, waiting for the consolation of our people or the people of other oppressed nations? You get the point. These stories are at once history and they are at once the present revealed to us in the Spirit –as present day readers, the Spirit helps us “find ourselves” in God’s story – a little nod to our Fall 2025 series.

On this Epiphany Sunday, as we consider a couple of different scriptural moments in God’s story with us, I decided it would be helpful for us to approach these stories with a focus on spiritual reading – a reading that invites the Spirit to help us to “come and see” what God is saying to us through the scriptures as we pay attention by quieting our hearts. While we are ideally doing this whenever we read scripture, sometimes it is helpful to have a sermon time where we remember not just to listen with our intellect, trying to think about applying wisdom to our lives in the moment or afterwards (if we can remember), but instead to have a sermon time where we are given the permission to take brief moments of quiet to slow down, close our eyes, and listen to the Spirit right then and there with some basic prompts from the story. So, that is what I want to give us permission to do this morning as we consider a couple of moments from the story of the Magi and a couple of moments from the two disciples of John who encountered Jesus that one fateful day. As we move along, I’ll read a short passage from each story and give us some prompts to consider. Throughout I invite you to close your eyes and listen prayerfully to hear what God is saying to you through these prompts. I pray that this may be a time of Epiphany for all of us – a time where God reveals to us God’s presence in our lives today.

First, let us consider 3 verses from the story of the Magi and then let us contemplate two simple phrases from those verses that will serve as our prompts:

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Magi 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; (Matthew 2:1-3)

Our first prompt is given to us in the Magi's words to Herod: "Where is the child.....For we observed his star at its rising." I invite you to close your eyes and consider that you are one of the Magi. You are engaged, at your age and stage of life, in observing signs of God's activity among you and you find yourself seeking God, asking "where is Emmanuel, God with us?" [Slowly]

Take a moment and think about an average day in your life.

What do you observe throughout your day?

Is it your body, young or old as it may be? Is God there as a sign for you? A sign that you are on a journey with a beginning and an end, and that God is with you on that journey, with its many moments of strength and weakness? A sign, too, that God has made you wonderfully, even in the fragility of this life? Can this sign – even this sign – lead you to bow down and worship? Can you offer a gift to God with your body – in your walking, in your speaking, in your working, in your volunteering, and in your resting?

What do you observe throughout your day?

Is it the people around you? Is it your neighbour across the street who needs help? Is it your life partner or a family member in your household with whom you are navigating the future together? Or is it your child, who longs for your attention? Is God present in them as a sign for you to bring the gift of your intentional presence and offerings of thanksgiving for them?

What do you observe throughout your day?

Is it the world around you? The trees that you pass along your travels, and the birds who nest there? Is God there as a sign too, a sign that the Lord of trees is calling you to put down roots into the deep soil of God's love so that you can be a source of shelter for others and so that you can weather the storms of life? Is it the stars that you observe on a clear night? Is God there as a sign, a sign that the Lord of the heavens is calling you to come out of a time of slumber and aspire to move, to rise in Spirit to follow the God who has created galaxies, black holes, sun and moon and stars?

What do you observe throughout your day?

Is it your phone or computer, with an important email or the latest content available to stream? Is God present in those moments too? Calling you to reach out and search out that which forms and shapes you into a person of God's peace?

What do you observe throughout your day?

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Our second prompt from this story is given to us in Herod and the people's response to the words of the Magi: "he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him"

*What do you fear?*

Is it the future? Is it a health diagnosis or the lack thereof? Is it what will happen if you decide to be vulnerable about complicated relationship in your life?

*What do you fear?*

Is it what will happen if you admit you were wrong? Is God present in your fear, too? Rather than continually responding out of fear, like Herod, is God calling you to name your fears and see them transformed, viewing them encompassed within the greater love that surrounds you?

*What do you fear?*

*May God be a guiding star for us this Epiphany day, like God was the guiding star for the Magi. May God reveal to us that God is present in our moments and our days, that we need not be overcome by fear like Herod, but may bring our fears to foot of the manger, leaving them there to be transfigured into gifts of trust for the road ahead this year.*

Next, let us consider 4 verses from the story of the two disciples of John who encountered Jesus that one fateful day as recounted in the Gospel of John 1:35-39:

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "**What are you looking for?**" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "**where are you staying?**" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day.

Our first prompt from this passage is given to us in Jesus' question to the disciples: "What are you looking for?" Again, I invite you to close your eyes and consider that you are one of the two disciples. At your age and stage of life, you have many desires, many wishes, perhaps many new years resolutions. [Slowly] Take a moment and think about some of those desires.

*What are you looking for in your life at this age and stage?*

Is it friendship? Have losses and time brought loneliness? Can you hear the invitation of Jesus in this desire for friendship? "Come and See" the friendship of God in my presence – my presence with you in the quiet, my presence with you in the fellowship of the church (fallible that it is), and my presence in those others who you can befriend. Come and See how my friendship is here and there.

*What are you looking for in your life at this age and stage?*

Is it reconciliation with a loved one? A partner, a relative, a sibling, or a friend? Can you hear the invitation of Jesus in this desire for reconciliation? “Come and See” the reconciliation that I bring by travelling the dusty roads of relationships in all their ups and downs. “Come and See” that I name what’s wrong and how it can get better, and that you too can name what’s wrong and how it can get better, even in those complicated relationships you navigate. Come and see.

*What are you looking for in your life at this age and stage?*

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Our second prompt from this passage is given to us in the disciples’ words: “Where are you staying?” This word “staying” is a significant one that appears again and again in the Gospel of John: it can be translated as “abiding” or “remaining.” “Where are you abiding, Jesus?” or “Where are you remaining, Jesus?” are also valid translations. Again, I invite you to close your eyes and consider this to be your prayer. At your age and stage of life, you long to spend time with Jesus – you may not always realize this, but it is a desire at the center of your being. This question – “Where are you staying?” - expresses our longing – it is the prayer that we will leave with today as we close this time of spiritual reading:

“Jesus, Where are you staying?”

What are the spaces we can remain with Jesus? We believe that Jesus is with us wherever we go, but it is important too to name specific places that we frequent, so that we can reflect on Jesus' presence there.

“Jesus, Where are you abiding?”

What about our homes? Think about your homes, about the living room or kitchen or playroom, or laundry room. Does Jesus abide with you in those spaces? Does he remain in our spaces of meaning making? Does he shape those spaces? Can his words be heard there? Is his rest experienced there?

“Jesus, Where are you staying?”

What about our workplaces? Does he remain in the secular spaces of the streets and establishments we frequent? When unkind words are spoken, does Jesus remain in those spaces as a silent listener? Or, does he stoop low before the eyes of those watching, to draw on the ground, and then utter a word of grace to those cast aside?

“Jesus, Where are you abiding?”

What about in the spaces of dialogue and difference? Does he remain in the encounters we have with those we consider enemies or opponents? When global leaders and politicians encourage us to become more self-interested, does Jesus remain in those spaces as a confirmation of our bias? Or does Jesus challenge us to make peace and reach out where others say that peace is a pipe dream?

“Jesus, Where are you staying?”

Kids, what about in our schools? Does Jesus remain there, not only in a moment of silence first thing in the morning, but with you as you do your work and play with friends? As you learn and take in new knowledge at school, does Jesus’ story remain with you, helping you grow in stature and wisdom as his disciple? As kids at school may you be the presence of the loving Jesus, welcoming your peers with grace and peace. And as parents, teachers, and inter-generational friends of our children here at church, may we be the abiding presence of Jesus supporting them in this task.

“Jesus, Where are you staying?”

This is also a question that invites an answer that might surprise us. What if we ask it and hear: “I am among those people over there that you’ve been avoiding? That you’ve judged to be unfit to associate with? That you’ve always held ill feelings towards?” Will we go with Jesus if he tells us that he is remaining there?

“Jesus, Where are you staying?”

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With the Spirit’s help, we’ve prayerfully considered prompts from the scriptures this morning. In response to this spiritual reading we’ve engaged in, Jesus says, just as he said to his disciples:

“*Come and See.*” I have given you signs to observe. I have called you beyond your fear. I can help you find what you are looking for. I am walking with you and I am going ahead of you to

prepare a place for you to remain with me, so that we might be one, and that you might walk in my footsteps. Come and See.”

May it be so this year of 2026 – may we respond to the invitation of Jesus, keeping that invitation at the center of our hearts like a burning flame, a guiding star. May it be so. Amen.