

Epiphany 5

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #398)

“Give to the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son.”
(Psalm 72:1)

The Advent season is filled with hymns of anticipation, prophecy, and promise. Christmas hymns and carols celebrate the birth of the “Savior of the Nations.” The world around us prepares for and celebrates Christmas, but even before the twelve days of Christmas have passed, new displays point us to the next holiday. The Epiphany season is overlooked. However, in the life of the Church, we continue the celebration of our Savior, proclaiming Jesus as the “morning star,” “the Christ our Lord,” the only Son from heaven,” “the Son of God,” and “the Lord’s anointed!” EPIPHANY is a big deal!

What does it mean to be “anointed?” In 1 Samuel 16, we read of Samuel, the high priest, anointing Saul as the first king of Israel, and then David as the second king. In Exodus 30, God commands Aaron and all of his sons to be anointed before serving God as priests. In these instances, men, chosen by God, were anointed with fragrant oil poured upon their heads as a way of saying, “This is the one, the one who smells good. He’s the new king,” or “He’s the new priest.” When these chosen servants were anointed, they earned a new name, *christ*, someone whom God has anointed to be his servant.

While the people looked for a glorious version of the old anointed one, through the prophets God continued His promise to send His Christ, anointed not with holy oil, but with the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the work of all the old kings and priests. So, at His baptism, God, in a voice from heaven, called Jesus his beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the *Christ*, the servant of God, who will do God’s work.

By designating Jesus as the anointed one, His ministry is given ultimate authority. Jesus, “David’s greater Son,” came at the right time to “break oppression,” “set the captive free,” and “rule in equity.” His ministry wasn’t to the social or religious elite, but he came “to help the poor and needy.” Doesn’t that sound like us? Our souls, although “condemned and dying” ARE “precious in His sight.” As Jesus rules as king upon the earth, he extends love, joy, and hope to all. Jesus’ realm isn’t only on earth, as recognized by the Magi, but extends to the kingdom without end. Stanza 5 makes a final declaration of Jesus’ reign over every foe for eternity! His ministry on earth was an expression of His great love for us. His covenant of LOVE is timeless and cannot be broken!

So, while the world may ignore Epiphany, we are given an extended opportunity to give thanks to God for the gift of His Son—the anointed One, our Savior!

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Hail to the Lord's anointed, Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free,
To take away transgression and rule in equity.

He comes with rescue speedy to those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy and bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in His sight.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in His path to birth.
Before Him on the mountains shall peace, the herald, go;
And righteousness in fountains from hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before Him and gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him, His praise all people sing.
To Him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.

O'er ev'ry foe victorious, He on His throne shall rest,
From age to age more glorious, all blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove;
His name shall stand forever—that name to us is Love.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771-1854

Tune: Leonhart Schröter, c. 1532-c. 1601

(Both text and tune are in the public domain.)

[This devotion has been prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music. It may be downloaded and duplicated for local use.]