



The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

[January 6.]

The Collect.

**O** GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

In today's devotion on Chapter 16, Job expounds upon what one should expect, and NOT expect, from a friend. In the opening two verses, Job declares that all he has heard from his three friends is nothing new to his ears, but rather common knowledge; however, instead of being faithful comforters, his three friends are on a binge of condemnation – the very opposite of what a friend in need should expect. We all make mistakes in life often not related to intentional sin, but how often our friends and companions come forward with railing accusations of how our sins have resulted in our misfortune.

Job alleges that the words of his friends are vain. He wonders at the bravery of ignorance on their part, for ignorance is surely brave. *4 I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. 5 But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.* Every belligerent fellow can condemn and accuse, but a true friend will seek diligently for words of comfort. There are ways of framing our words to have an opposite effect even if the meaning is constant; for example: If I tell a young lady that her face is "enough to make **time stand still**" I will have a good effect on her disposition; but if I say, "Your face is enough to **stop a clock**" the result will not be at all favorable even though the two phrases technically have the same meaning.

*6 Though I speak, my grief is not asswaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?* When Job openly states his case, even greater words of condemnation fall from the mouths of his friends. If he remains silent, the same result ensues. He is saying to his friends, "What must I do or say; not do, or not say; to gain the sympathy of a friend?" *7 But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. 8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face.* "My deep despondency now is

matched by my physical appearance" says Job. "I look like an aged wreck, and I am, indeed, an aged wreck inside." If you would feel my heart with comforting words, the outside appearance might, as well, assume that happy countenance. It is much like one of our favorite verses of Psalms – *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* (Psalms 51:7) The same principle applies here: God purges with a purgative (hyssop) our inner heart first; He then washes our physical appearance to match the beauty within.

Job finally, abandons tact and speaks his real mind regarding those who present themselves as friends. He makes direct reference to them as 'enemies.' **9 He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me.** To whom do you believe Job makes reference as his enemies if not Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar? Job has a cross to bear. Have you, too, born your cross which you are commanded to take up daily? Every devout Christian will have moments not unlike those of Christ upon the cross – perhaps not physically, but certainly spiritually. How very like the Calvary experiences of our LORD to the words Job utters here. *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.* (Psalms 22:12-13)

If the world loves you, it must not recognize anything of Christ in you. **11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12 I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.** These words are precise and true. God has delivered Job into the hands of the ungodly (Satan and his allies) but only with qualified limitations. IT is likely that the three friends of Job do cherish his friendship just as did Peter when he counseled the Lord against His perfect will: *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*** (Matt 16:21-23) We often play the part of the devil with the best intentions. We all know the old adage, "The streets of Hel are paved with good intentions." It is too often so. Remember that old roaring lion of 1 Peter 5:8. He takes the innocent lamb from the outermost edge of the flock which was in perfect peace. He grabs it by the neck with his teeth and shakes it mercilessly to break its neck and to end the struggle. Satan will render the child of God just as paralyzed as a broken neck if we fall into his strong teeth.

**13 His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant. 15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust.** These are much like the words of Jesus on the cross: *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.* (Psalms 22:16) Job recognizes the hand of the devil behind the words of his friend and seems now to directly address his grievances to the sole agent of his suffering –Satan. His words are prophetic, as well, of the suffering of Christ. Christ was the One perfect and complete Sacrifice for our sins - without blemish and without sin. Yet he suffered as no other has ever suffered – for us!

**16 My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death;**  
**17 Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure.** This is the shared fellowship of suffering with Christ that Job experiences. He is righteous in God's eye. He has done no evil of which he is accused – yet he suffers as one condemned in sin. Perhaps many good Christians, in the final struggle and throes of death, pray for the relief of the grave. The grave is not feared by them, but viewed as the doorway to their reward in Heaven. **18 O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.** There will never be a cry of pain from the grave of those who die in the Lord. Life is in the blood, and the grave cannot extinguish the life of a saint.

**19 Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.** Job declares that his innocent is already determined by that Magistrate on high – his name is recorded in the Book of Life while the wicked have no name at all written in the parched earth of Hell for one needs no name in Hell.

Instead of offering words of sympathy and comfort to Job, his friends scorn him. Does this not epitomize the meaning of a "fair weather friend?" **20 My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.** If we give our tears to God, He will keep them in his bottle. (Psalms 56:8) God will take upon his own shoulders our grief's and miseries if we will only offer them to Him.

Job posits a question that is truly a great prophecy: **21 O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!** Have you considered if this prophecy has yet been fulfilled? Have you remembered our One intermediary between God and man – Christ Jesus, our Lord – whose death on the cross tore the Temple Veil from top to bottom making a direct access for us to the Throne of Grace? No other intermediary will suffice but Christ! What comforting words we read from John's first epistle: ***And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*** (1 John 2:1-2) Christ has even defeated our Accuser and has taken a retainer as our Advocate – and at such as time as Satan has been cast into the Lake of Fire.

**22 When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.** These might be the words of every man and woman born upon earth. None shall return to this dreary and sin-filled world. All have an inheritance of eternal duration – either Heaven or Hell. Life is short, and even seventy or eighty years are a few short years compared to our eternal destiny. Job might consider, rightly, that the vain words of his friends are only a tiny ripple on the seas of eternity, and they ARE! No one in Hell will reminisce of the happy moments and time on earth – they can only be distracted by a constant pain – both physical and spiritual; but the Heaven-born soul shall be full of happy memories of his First Love on earth, and he shall be comforted by His beauty and glory moment by moment. Have you that assurance, dear Reader?