

Epiphany Sermon 2010
Ephesians 3: 1-12; Mt 2: 1-12

I have a big secret to tell you this morning. If you were listening to the readings just now, you might already know it.

Does anyone here remember Sesame Street? Is it still on? When I was watching it, there used to be a teaching song on it that went like this:

*Three of these things belong together
Three of these things are kinda the same
But one of these things just doesn't belong here – now it's time to play our game*

So let's play: I'll name four things and you tell me which one doesn't belong.

- 1) O holy Night, silent night, it came upon the midnight clear, and amazing grace.
- 2) Hank Moorlag, John Maissan, Doris Mader, and Harris Cox

It's not as easy as it would first appear right? In the first example, you could say that three are Christmas songs and one is not....but you could also say that three are in Voices United and one is not, three are about night time and one is not.....you get the idea/

In the second example you could say that three are men and one is a woman
Or three are in the choir and one is not
Or

It depends on the way you look at it. Everything depends on the way you choose to see.

And the truth is – no one is really left out because in some scheme, some way of ordering things, everyone is included.

And that's the big secret. Now you know. The **BIG SECRET** it – everybody belongs. **NO ONE** is left out. Everybody belongs. That's the secret – everybody belongs. What's the big secret? (let them say it)

That's exactly what the author of Ephesians says. (READ 3: 3-6)

It seems as though we humans have a really hard time learning that. From the very beginning, God' people have fallen into the trap of trying to say who is in and who is out. Who belonged and who did not. They didn't know the secret. **YOU DO THOUGH**. What is it again????

In the early church the fight was over Gentiles. That is, people who were not Jewish. Many of the Jewish people believed that God's love and law were only for them. Some of the prophets knew better, and they spoke out – like Isaiah, whose prophesy we read today. But many of them still believed that God's love and law were only for them.

Imagine! Thinking that God loves only SOME people.

And then, even when some of the Jews became Christians, they still couldn't get that idea out of their heads. They thought that to be Xn you had to become a Jew first. A GREAT DEAL of the New Testament reflects that struggle. It was a fight, really. One of the first church fights. There have been lots more since, almost all of them over who belongs and who does not.

Baptism for example. Communion too. Those discussions almost always centre on the question of who belongs and who does not. More recently issues like ordination of women, then of gays and lesbians....it goes on and on. And of course the current and most vital issue of all is....when we speak of the family of God and who is included in God's love and care – are we speaking of the earth itself, animals, plants, the natural world? And on that question hangs.....our future, doesn't it? And it IS a spiritual question. With very practical and life-and-death implications.

(and it's important to say that I'm talking about Jews because that's the historical situation we're dealing with here but that in no way is meant to say that all Jews were or are exclusive, or that others do not fall into the same trap -)

It's as though we've played the Sesame Street game in our faith communities....who doesn't belong? Who will be left out of God's love and consequently our caring and compassion

But now we know the truth. This is the epiphany truth. What's the secret?

Everyone belongs. No one is left out.

But you have to have the eyes to see. You have to let the starlight lead you. You have to walk in a certain kind of light.

When someone starts playing that game, politically, or in the family, or in economic policy or in school...when it seems as though a game is being played and someone is going to get left out....

Remember the light. Remember the categories we are using. The category that we use is

“things and people whom God loves”

That's the category. Not things that are red or blue or begin with the letter of the day. God's love is the category.

And it is the light of God's Christmas star that helps us see it that way. Without that light we keep getting lost.

We keep leaving people out.

We keep forgetting to include those in the shadows....those who can't speak for themselves, those who aren't as media worthy or attractive or able to give back or to be appreciative enough for our liking

We keep forgetting the earth for God's sake! And I DO MEAN for God's sake.

Without the light of the Christmas star we keep playing the game. Somebody or something doesn't belong.

By the light of the Christmas star we see that game for what it is. A GAME. And a dangerous one. And by its light we know that BIG SECRET that God has whispered...no....SHOUTED....in everyone's ear.

EVERYONE BELONGS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The love of God knows no boundaries. God's love reaches beyond all the boundaries we create. All people – and all life – belongs to God.

God's love reaches beyond categories of colour age class wealth education, religion, species....

Beyond categories we've made for ourselves too. Not good enough. Not smart enough. Not holy enough, not perfect enough.....

It reaches deep inside you and erases those lines you've drawn. All those things you've hidden away, the guilt the fear and anger, resentment, pain that you have burning inside you and by which you judge yourself in the dark of night and you can't sleep.....

The light of that star shines especially bright then and shines its warmth right to the centre of that coldness and pain.

Past all of that

And offers you love beyond your wildest imagining.

God's love is show to us by the Christmas star and teaches us new categories. New ways of judging, measuring, labeling and naming.

The Christmas star shines and in that light we see revealed the only way that's real; the only true way to see and value and measure worth.

Our worth in the eyes of our creator. And to God, we are precious – worth everything. Worth living for; worth dying for – worth everything.

Go from here now, in the light of the Christmas star, to share the BIG SECRET – to whisper it, shout it, live it –

And the secret is????

THANKS BE TO GOD.