The Epiphany of Our Lord January 6, 2019

Year C – the Gospel of Luke

Lutheran

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Personal photo by Harold Weseloh

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 395 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 343 "O Morning Star, how fair and bright (How Lovely Shines the Morning Star)"

Phillip Nicolia (1556-1608) wrote both the tune and the text for this hymn. Originally it had 7 verses, which in German formed an acrostic from the opening letters of each verse: W, E, G, U, H, Z and W. Wilhelm Ernst, Graf und Herr zu Waldeck is a reference to a former student. The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) had seven verses while it's contemporary, Service Book and Hymnal (1958) only has three. Both are based on the same melody, Wie schon leuchtet. Verse content varies greatly. TLH catogizes it as "The Redeemer" but SBH includes it as "Praise and Adoration". The Lutheran Book of Worship (1978), combining, editing and adding to TLH and SBH, followed the guidance of the "Consultation on Ecumenical Hymnody" has six verses and follows the AH including it in "Ephipany". In response to disagreements about the LBW by the LC-MS, Lutheran Worship (1982) is developed, but stays in agreement with the LBW, a six verse Epiphany hymn. Christian Worship (1993), based on TLH, has five verses. The Ambassador Hymnal (1994) has the three verses based on the SBH translation, but has different wording. The Lutheran Service Book (2006) adds a final wrinkle. It reverses order for verses 5 and six and changes the tune to a different setting; Choralbuch zum Evangelischen Kirchengesangbuch, Berlin, 1955).

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oYbA032cz8 "LCMS-U TABOO Conference 2015" For more information on this conference go to https://blogs.lcms.org/2015/campus-conference-takes-on-taboo-topics
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEp9W WTdI4 Morning Chapel 1-19-2012 WELS Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Martin Luther Chapel
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2iytank4bg "The Buxtehude setting for organ of the chorale How Lovely Shines the Morning Star is played by David Christensen on a Moller organ." (7 minutes)

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by <u>Crossway Bibles</u>, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Isaiah 60:1-6; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (Next week: Baptism of our Lord: Isaiah 43: 1-7; RCL, the same reading)

"Every prophetic oracle is spoken within a historical context.

I believe that, as preachers, we must always begin from this simple but poignant realization. Too easily can we craft the words of proclamation by slipping beyond the limit imposed by context. We shape an overarching narrative to bolster a particular viewpoint (our own viewpoint, our own cultural bias), applying the story to ourselves without much disruption of practice. The prophetic voice, however, always calls for disruption of some sort, even in its most jubilant and comforting exclamations.

Too simplistically, we can read Isaiah 60 on Epiphany and conjure up images of the three magi bearing gifts, finally making it to the manger. We can reduce epiphany to a cute story that satisfies our deepest longing for narrative integrity. And yet, epiphany is so much more than a story of three magi...

The liturgical season that Isaiah 60 inaugurates is a season of revelation. Epiphany, in the early church, was not about the arrival of the magi but the revelation of Jesus Christ, at his baptism, to the whole world as God's only and beloved child. Epiphany is God's self-revelation to the world, the beginning of Christ's public ministry. It was one of the three major feasts of the liturgical calendar around which faith communities organized the rhythms of their life: Easter, Epiphany, Pentecost (not Christmas or a nativity scene or magi!)..." (continued after the reading)

The Future Glory of Israel

60 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.
Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, [a]
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

- 1. Isaiah 60:5 Hebrew your heart shall tremble and grow wide
- "...When reading Isaiah 60 publicly, without also reading at least the preceding chapter, the radical irruption of light and glory, consolation and joy is missed. Chapters 58 and 59 are characterized by gloom, by despair, by a call to repentance (the ways of the wicked are crooked, our transgressions are many, our sins testify against us). They are also marked by a yearning for light and glory to come (we wait for the light but there is only darkness).

The opening line of Isaiah 60 is like a thunderbolt of glory... What surprises the reader or hearer is the abruptness of the shift from doom and gloom to light and glory. Perhaps what is

most surprising in this shift is God's response to the people's crooked ways and their sense of despair: they are not to mend their ways first (out of fear) rather God comes, God interrupts, God arises and shines forth in glory!

This coming, this shining forth is unconditional. God is always a God whose glory is salvific. The people's repentance, the mending of ways, the living out of justice is a response to this coming! It is not an attempt to be made right with God but it is thanksgiving for the one who comes, who reveals life and salvation in the midst of the community..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1549_Dirk G. Lange Associate Dean; Fredrik A. Schiotz Chair of Missions and Professor of Worship, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Psalm 72:1-11 (12-15); RCL, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 (*Psalm 29: RCL, the same reading*)

"Psalm 72 is a royal psalm -- a psalm about the earthly kings of Israel.

"Psalm 72 is an odd psalm. And Psalm 72 an important psalm.

Or, for the purpose of considering Psalm 72 on the occasion of the day of Epiphany, we might call it an oddly important royal psalm..." (continued after the reading)

Give the King Your Justice Of Solomon.*

72 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!

² May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!

³ Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness!

- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!
- ⁵ May they fear you^[a] while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!
- ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
- ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River^[b] to the ends of the earth!
- ⁹ May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust!
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute;

may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!

- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!
- ¹² For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.
- Long may he live;
 may gold of Sheba be given to him!
 May prayer be made for him continually,
 and blessings invoked for him all the day!
 May there be abundance of grain in the land;
 on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
 may its fruit be like Lebanon;
 and may people blossom in the cities
 like the grass of the field!
 May his name endure forever,
 his fame continue as long as the sun!
 May people be blessed in him,
 all nations call him blessed!
- Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.
 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
 Amen and Amen!
- ²⁰ The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.
 - 1. Psalm 72:5 Septuagint He shall endure
 - 2. Psalm 72:8 That is, the Euphrates

*There is debate about the subtitle "Of Solomon". Some feel it is "for" Solomon, other s "about" Solomon and still others who think that it was written by an aging David and finished by Solomon. Still others feel it is a somewhat generic Psalm for use by the people at a coronation.

An Oddly Placed Psalm

Psalm 72 is the only Psalm "of Solomon" in the Psalter -- the only psalm that bears the superscription (lishelomoh). Oddly, however, there are two "editorial additions" at the end of the psalm. By "editorial additions," I mean phrases that most psalms scholars believe were added to the psalm proper by scribes who were compiling the psalms.

The first of these editorial additions is the "doxology" in vv. 18-19. This doxology closes "Book II" of the Psalter. (Doxologies similar to this also appear at the end of Books I, III, and IV of the Psalter == see Ps 41:13, 89:52, and 106:48)...

This doxology marks Psalm 72 as the final psalm in Book II of the Psalter. Some scholars have argued that the transition from Psalm 72 to Psalm 73 is the major "hinge" of the Book of Psalms.

The second of these two editorial additions is the postscript: "The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended." The important psalms scholar Gerald Wilson, who did more than anyone else to spark modern scholarly research into the final editing and shape of the Psalter, was emphatic that this scribal postscript to Psalm 72 "is the only explicit indicator of editorial shaping of the Psalter."

Two things are odd about this postscript.

First, the postscript follows a psalm "of Solomon," not a psalm of David. Odd. Second, there are many more "psalms of David" that occur later in the Psalter. Odd.

What Does This Mean?

So, to ask favorite catechetical question, "What does this mean?" Without boring into pages of scholarly argumentation (you see what I did there I am sure), allow me to cut to the chase. There are **two** main lines of interpretation:

A Criticism of Israel's Kings

A first line of interpretation would hold that this royal psalm of Solomon was placed at this point in the Psalter as a criticism of Israel's kings...

A Promise of the Ideal Davidic King (The Messiah)

A second line of interpretation would hold that this royal psalm -- along with other royal psalms that are placed at key points in the book of Psalms -- was placed at the key hinge of the Psalter because Israel believed that God would keep the promises embedded in this psalm...

Note that other key voices in the Old Testament anticipated an ideal Davidic King -- The Messiah -- who was expected to come. See here Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and others.

My Final Answer: Jesus So, put it all together... And what do you get? Jesus.

That's my final answer.

As John the Baptist asked, "Are you the one to come? Or should we expect another?" And how did Jesus respond? Tell people what you see. The lame walk, the blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the poor have good news preached to them.

In a word: Jesus. In a phrase: Jesus The Christ.

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2744
<u>Jacobson</u> Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

"...The very notion of praying for a ruler is instructive. What if Americans measured the amount of time they expend complaining about a president or governor or mayor and instead of grousing, actually offered up intensive prayers for the leader in question? The Episcopalians

prescribe, as part of their weekly worship regimen, prayers for the president (or for the queen if the praying is being done in the British Commonwealth). During campaigns, many voters are terrified that if the one they are not supporting wins, catastrophe will strike. But wouldn't it make sense, if that dreaded candidate is elected, that we pray constantly that we will be proven wrong, and that the new leader will in fact prosper?..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1520 James Howell Senior Pastor, Myers Park United Methodist Church, Charlotte, N.C.

Ephesians 3:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Romans 6:1-11: RCL, Acts 8:14-17)

"...The first three chapters of the epistle deal with doctrine; the last three chapters, with duty. In the first half Paul explains the riches of God's grace; in the last half he exhorts the recipients of God's grace...

In our approach to a new chapter of any book in the Bible we need to take care lest we lose the thought in the preceding chapter. There is sometimes the danger of missing the continuity of some particular idea or even a doctrine when we break up our reading and study-periods by chapters. If we keep in mind that the first three chapters in Ephesians have to do with the creation and design of the Church, we can look for the progress of thought in that connection as we begin our study of chapter three..."

https://bible.org/seriespage/2-calling-and-design-church-ephesians-1-3 "Lehman Strauss taught Old Testament history for eight years at Philadelphia Bible Institute, and served as pastor... from 1939 to 1963 ...when he resigned to devote full time to an itinerant Bible conference and evangelistic ministry both in the States and abroad."

""Mystery" is the term that runs throughout this passage from Ephesians. It fits the day in the liturgical year because an "epiphany" is a manifestation of something. And in this case what is revealed has been a mystery.

The term "mystery" appears several times in just a few verses, helping to catch the attention of readers. After all, many of us find it hard to resist a good mystery. Paul says that a mystery has been made known to him (3:3). And it is a mystery about Jesus (3:4). No one has really understood this mystery before. It has been hidden through the ages (3:9). So those who listen in will come to know the mystery. Thus far the passage has all the makings of a new version of a bestselling novel. We might even give it a title like "The Jesus Code." Apparently God also knows that we like a good mystery..." (Continued after the reading)

The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

3 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the

Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is [a] that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in ^[b] God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

- 1. Ephesians 3:6 The words This mystery is are inferred from verse 4
- 2. Ephesians 3:9 Or by

"...The mystery that Paul speaks will depart from the standard patterns of a mystery story in at least **three** ways:

First, the heart of the story is not something tragic, like theft and murder, but something magnificent, namely a gift. To be sure, this is an inheritance case. Paul is speaking about the Gentiles coming into the inheritance of salvation. But in a typical mystery story, one of the heirs to an estate usually plots to seize the whole inheritance. The idea is to exclude others from the gift, so that one heir can have it all.

In Ephesians, however, the mystery revolves around God giving the inheritance away too freely. What is so mysterious is that God has written a whole new group of heirs into his will. This does not shortchange those who were heirs before, because there are "boundless riches" in Christ (3:8). There is plenty to go around. So the mystery in this case is the mystery of grace. Second, Paul does not work with a small cast of characters but speaks in cosmic terms about what God is doing. This is a story that has to do with the vast group known as the Gentiles... To be sure, the Gentiles are an unlikely group for God to be including in the inheritance. Traditionally, Gentiles were those who worshiped other gods. They were not the devotees of the God of Israel.

(Second) The key to the inheritance is that through Christ, God has called the Gentiles to faith in a new way. It is through faith in Christ (3:12) that the Gentiles are brought into relationship with God and given an inheritance in his grace. The mystery that was revealed to Paul was that God was not content to let the Gentiles be separated from him. Instead, God has acted to bring them into a new relationship with him. And Christ was the way God did that. Note that the inheritance theme was sounded early in Ephesians (Eph 1:14, 18). The letter recognizes that sin separates all people from God. Therefore all people-Jews and Gentiles-have the same need of grace. No one has an inborn right to be an heir of God's grace. People become heirs by the mercy of God. Moreover, all people are called to the same faith. To be a child of God is to relate to God in faith. And faith has a future. The mercy and gift of the Spirit that people have already received is an assurance of this. People are God's children now, in faith. And faith has a future through the promise of resurrection.

Third, this means that the revelation of the mystery is not the end of the story. It creates a new beginning of a story. The usual pattern is that once the mystery is revealed, we can close the book. The case is solved. The suspense is over. But for Paul, the revelation of the mystery is just the beginning. If God has extended the promise of an inheritance to the Gentiles, this opens up a vast new chapter. Paul is in the business of making the news of what God has done public (3:7-10)..."

"...However, the priority of God in revelation and redemption could not be clearer than it is in the Epistle to the Ephesians. There we find a frequent emphasis on the power and prerogative of God in process of receiving divine revelation and in the application of redemption to and through the church to the entire cosmos...

In Ephesians 3, for example, Paul does not say that he "decided to become a minister," as if it was one of many options that he could choose between... Rather, using the Greek passive form, the text makes clear that Paul "was made" a minister according to God's grace and according to the working of God's power. This was part of God's plan before it was part of Paul's...

Whether you are a preacher, teacher, congregant, or a little child, the message of Ephesians is that your confidence as a chosen, loved, valuable, redeemed human being rests in the election, work, initiative, power, and faithfulness of Jesus Christ."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3525_John Frederick Lecturer in New Testament, Trinity College Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Matthew 2:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Luke 3:15-22; RCL, Luke 3:15-17, 21-22)

"...The story in Matthew can be divided into five scenes: the arrival of the magi (2:1-2); Herod's alarm and consultation of the priests and scribes (2:3-6); Herod's request of the magi (2:7-8); the magi's visit and adoration of the Christ child (2:9-11); and the departure of the magi (2:12). The first, third, and fourth scenes are punctuated by the verb "worship" or "pay homage" (proskynein), which highlights a main feature of the narrative: the magi take the role of the Gentiles who will come paying homage and bringing gifts to the Messiah according to Psalm 72:10-11. The sincerity of the magi's worship of Jesus is contrasted with Herod's insincere pledge to worship Jesus. In reality, King Herod will try to eliminate this newborn, rival "king of the Jews," who threatens to usurp his title! Matthew probably has Jesus' death already in view when he has the magi refer to Jesus as "the king of the Jews" (2:2) rather than as Christ (cf. 2:4), in anticipation of the charge under which Jesus will eventually be crucified (27:11, 29, 37) (Matthew uses the title only in these places)..." (Continued after the reading)

"The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 2nd Chapter"

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose^[b] and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." <u>Cited from Mic. 5:2</u>

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

- 1. Matthew 2:1 Greek magi; also verses 7, 16
- 2. Matthew 2:2 Or in the east; also verse 9

"This is the Gospel of the Lord" "Praise to You, O Christ"

"...But there is more than meets the eye in the identification of these magi as from the "East". The word used for the "East" in the story, anatolai (plural)/anatole (singular), really means "the rising," that is, the rising of the sun (our word "orient" comes from a Latin word with the same meaning: oriens). The word anatole would have had a number of resonances for the first Greek-speaking, Jewish-Christian hearers of Matthew's story. First, the rising of the sun in the East readily suggests the imagery of light, which is often associated with salvation in the Bible. The Old Testament reading for the day (Isaiah 60:1-6), to which the magi story clearly alludes (see especially verses 5-6), begins with the words, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." The verb for "has risen" here, in the Septuagint translation, is anatetalken, from the same root as anatole. Isaiah's vision of salvation includes a pilgrimage of the nations, who will come to Israel's light, to worship the God of Israel. The Gentile magi are to be understood as enacting the fulfillment of this prophecy.

The verb *anatellein* appears with equal significance in other texts. We may mention first Numbers 24:17 (Septuagint), which speaks of a star that will rise out of Jacob. This verse was interpreted messianically in Judaism, and it is easy to see how a star could become a symbol for the Messiah. The star of Bethlehem is to be understood against the background of that text. The star indicates that the Messiah has arrived. *Anatellein* appears again in Matthew 4:16. Matthew comments on Jesus' appearance in Capernaum with a citation of Isaiah 8:23-9:1, which speaks of light shining on those who dwell in darkness. Matthew chooses the verb *anatellein* (not in the Septuagint). His usage is very similar to Luke 1:78-79, which speaks of the "dawn (*anatole*) from on high" that "will break upon us" (NRSV), to give light (*epiphanai*) to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, also an allusion to Isaiah 9:1; 60:1-2.

Finally, the word *anatole* is used in Jeremiah 23:5 with a different, but related meaning. Here the word refers to the righteous branch of David, that is, the Messiah. The branch that shoots up from a tree is a "rising" of a different kind (cf. Isaiah 11:1)..."

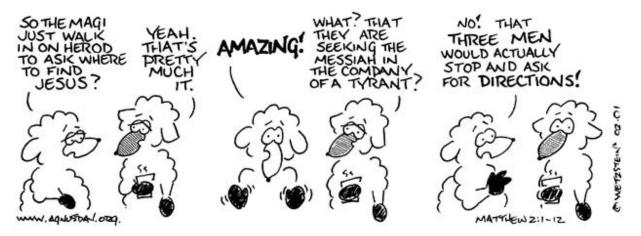
<u>http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2304</u>
<u>Stephen Hultgren</u> Lecturer in New Testament and Director of ALITE, Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, Australia



Although the picture shows a very traditional view of the visit of the Magi, it also serves to point out the need to search the Scriptures for the truth, not the tradition. Matthew is the only gospel to tell us of this visit and the subsequent flight to Egypt. Jesus was no longer in a manger at the time they arrived. The Bible does not say that there were three men or that one was black. The three gifts lead to

the tradition of three wise men and nothing Biblical refers to the race of the kings, just that they were from the East. And are they "kings", "wise men" or "Magi"? Matthew calls them "wise men", which in Greek is "Magi". The hymn calls them, "We Three Kings of Orient are...".

Halley' Bible Handbook (25th edition, Copyright 2000, pages 580-583) comments that "This must have occurred in the period when Jesus was between 40 days and 2 years old...These Wise men belonged to the learned class, those who were advisors to the kings...They certainly would have traveled with an entourage of perhaps dozens, for it would not be safe for a small group to travel 1000 miles over terrain infested with bandits...One of the objects of their visit, which they themselves did not know, was to supply money for the child's flight to Egypt. The parents were poor, and if it had not been for the gold and other expensive gifts...escape from Herod might not have been possible. The gifts ... can also be interpreted as foreshadowing Jesus' life and death...The return of Wise Men to their home countries may have paved the way for the later preaching of the Gospel."



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The Luke Challenge - Lectionary Year C, 2018-2019

Challenge yourself to produce a handwritten copy of the book of Luke by Christ the King Sunday, November 24, 2019.

December	Chapter 1	80 verses	completed
January	Chapters 2, 3	90 verses	completed
February	Chapters 4, 5	83 verses	completed
March	Chapters 6, 7	99 verses	completed
April	Chapters 8, 9	118 verses	completed
May	Chapters 10, 11	96 verses	completed
June	Chapters 12, 13	94 verses	completed
July	Chapters 14, 15, 16	98 verses	completed
August	Chapters 17, 18	80 verses	completed
September	Chapters 19, 20	95 verses	completed
October	Chapters 21, 22	109 verses	completed
November	Chapters 23, 24	109 verses	completed 11/24/2019



There's still time to start!