

Second Sunday After Epiphany
January 15, 2023

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

Greeting

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who makes all things new,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One, source of our renewal,
**we confess that we are wrapped up in sin,
and cannot free ourselves.
We have not practiced your righteousness.
Our hearts have turned away from you.**

**For the sake of the world you so love,
forgive us,
that we may be reconciled to one another
for the glory of your holy name.**

Amen.

Thus says our God:

“The former things have come to pass
and new things I now declare.”

God's mercy makes us new.

We are forgiven in the name of † Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn “Christ, Be Our Light”

#715 vs. 1,3,4,5

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, our strength and our redeemer, by your Spirit hold us forever, that through your grace we may worship you and faithfully serve you, follow you and joyfully find you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

¹Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.

²He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me;

he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away.

³And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

⁴But I said, “I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God.”

⁵And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—

⁶he says,

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;

I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

⁷Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers,

“Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

Children’s Message

Gospel: John 1:29-42

²⁹[John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.”³²And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!”³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.³⁸When 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?”³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon.⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed).⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

We hear questions in this Gospel text that are questions that the world is asking.

The disciples have heard John the Baptist’s proclamation, his preaching, his hollering if you will, at the banks of the Jordan. So, they know of Jesus. And, when he comes and they are there with John, he tells them, “here is the Lamb of God. And, the disciples follow.

It paints a picture of these disciples almost creepily following him down this path along the river, and Jesus notices, turns, and asks,

“What are you looking for?”

They said to him, “Rabbi, teacher, where are you staying?”

The word used for “staying” is abide. Teacher, where do you abide? Where do you make your dwelling place? Where is your home? Show us where we will find Jesus.

That is their response to “What are you looking for.” They want to know where Jesus abides. Where he makes a home. His dwelling place.

That is a question that this world asks. The world may not know that it is asking this question, and the world doesn’t necessarily voice this question, but the world is asking this question.

“Where does Jesus reside? Where does Jesus make a home? Where is Jesus’ dwelling place?”

Jesus responds telling the disciples to “come and see.”

“Come and see and I will show you where I make my home. Come and see and I will show you where I make a dwelling place. Come and see and I will show you where Jesus abides.”

And, in this exchange that Jesus and these first disciples have there is a call. Because, this is a question that the world around us as church is asking. This is a question that we as church are being asked.

“Show us Jesus. Make Jesus known to us.”

And, in that, is a challenge for us as church to think about how we answer.

Imagine you are walking down a path in Eau Claire and someone proclaim to those around them that “there goes someone who goes to Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, or simply there is a church person. There is a person who proclaims to know and love Jesus.”

Imagine people start following because of the knowledge that you are a church person. And in turn, you ask them, “what are you looking for.” And they respond, “we want to see where Jesus abides.”

What is your response to how you live out “come and see?”

That is a question that we MUST think about as church. That is a question that, again as we are in this Stewardship Appeal, we are tackling with what it means to be a 21st Century Neighborhood Church. We talk all of the time about all that we do here. We proudly talk about all of the good that we do here, and it is good, great, grand, wonderful, that we do those things.

But. Do people actually come to know Jesus because of those things? Or, are we doing them because we feel good doing them?

As church, we so often fight over who can and cannot be apart of this expansive grace that we experience in the love of Christ. We grapple over who gets to come to Christ’s table, and who maybe doesn’t.

When Jesus’ response to “Where do you abide,” is “come and see,” then that is what our response ought to be as well. So, while we think we do a great job of showing people Christ, we’re not going to be complacent. We are going to continue to ask,

“What are we missing? What aren’t we doing right? What could we be doing better?”

As we grapple with this question in Bible Study earlier this week, we started wondering about how we greet people that we haven’t seen in a long without sounding like, “it’s about time you’re here.”

Because, when we see people in worship that we haven’t seen in a long time we are excited. We want to greet them. We know that we feel better when they are a part of this worshiping community.

Now, if you are one of those people who grapples with that difficulty of how to greet someone without coming across in the wrong way, simply because you are excited to see them, you aren’t necessarily at fault. It is a delicate situation.

But, if you are one of those people, I would guess that you are one of those people who considers themselves a regular. And, regulars, in the church, (and this is a bit of a confession so please bear with us) have a term for the demographic of church people who attend worship maybe twice a year. Those two times happen to be larger holidays in the church calendar. Those holidays happen to be Christmas and Easter. It is so wonderful to see the sanctuary full of people worshipping on those days.

And, this is where the confession comes in. There is a term in the larger church for that demographic of people. They are affectionately referred to as ChrEasters. Christmas and Easter. And, we think, or have thought to this point that it is funny.

But, as we think about it. Does it do the Body of Christ, for us as people of faith called to build up that body, does it do the Body of Christ any good for that mission if we refer to that demographic of people who come to worship to celebrate the birth of the Savior and again the resurrection, does it do the body of Christ any good to refer to that demographic of people as Chreasters? Are we really living out the call of this

It seems harmless, at first, but as we think about it are we really living out the call of this Gospel text, where the world around us is asking the question, “Where can we find Jesus,” – are we doing any good for the mission answering that question if we say, “well, you won’t find him if you only come on Christmas and Easter.” And that is what we grapple with.

I say that not to shame people. We say it 1) as an apology if you are someone who maybe does only come on Christmas and Easter. Please hear this apology. And, if you are someone who has maybe used that term, please don’t feel shamed.

The hope is that we move forward. As people who may very well be here every single Sunday, and as people who maybe do only get here twice a year, that we realize that we are all seeking the answer, an answer, to that question of where do we find Jesus.

Because, that again, is the question the larger community asks. As a 21st Century Neighborhood Church that is a question that we are going to continue to grapple with.

While we celebrate that we are an incredibly accessible building, there is more that we can do.

While we have learned coming out of a pandemic that livestream worship is going to be a part of our regular we are going to grapple with how we can do it better.

While we have learned that having a social media presence is something a church must do, not just for the sake of posting an inspirational quote, but showing the world how they will see where Jesus lives because of what we do.

So, in the next year, as we think of the Living Into Our Mission 2023 Stewardship Appeal and what it means to be a 21st Century Neighborhood Church, we are going to think about how we tell the story of how Christ’s presence is experienced here.

And, instead of shaming people because they maybe only come twice a year we are going to celebrate every single time they are here.

We are going to tell the story of Christ’s presence that is experienced when you are here at Good Shepherd. We are going to hear the sometimes difficult critique of where we have dropped the ball, and we are going to do it all knowing that we are continuing to strive to find an answer to “where does Jesus abide? Where and how does Christ make a home in this place? How do we celebrate those who come asking that question?”

We are going to continually have that question in the back of our mind, “what are people looking for?” That is our call as church.

And we hear Jesus’ response, “come and see.”

When people come here, what are they going to see?

People of God, let us continue to strive to ask and seek an answer to that question.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Put a new song in the mouth of your church. Inspire the baptized to tell of your faithfulness, sharing the good news of your salvation throughout the earth. Bless the witness of missionaries. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

The waters of baptism call us into life in the Spirit. Preserve the world's waters: protect them from pollution, support plants and animals who depend on them, and bring rain in places of drought. Guide us in protecting local waterways and in responding to devastating floods. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

In Jesus you are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Show your mercy to all nations. Direct leaders to do your will; fill governing bodies with righteousness; equip judges with discernment and compassion. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You incline your ear to all who cry to you. Draw near to individuals and communities suffering violence, injustice, illness, or poverty. Hide them in the shadow of your hand and make us signs of your faithfulness to all in need (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Cassie, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Don and Betty.*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You are glorified in the servants you have called. With Martin Luther King Jr., give us bold trust in you. Even when it feels like a sharp sword or polished arrow, give us courage to receive your call to repentance and racial justice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

In every place and time, you have sanctified your people. We praise you for the testimony of those who have died in the faith. Strengthen us as we wait for the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.
Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Liberating God,
you break the bonds of injustice
and let the oppressed go free.
Receive these offerings in thanksgiving
for all your works of merciful power,
and shape us as people of your justice and freedom.
You we magnify and adore, through Jesus our Savior,
Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

Holy One,
we thank you for the healing
that springs forth abundantly from this table.
Renew our strength to do justice,
love kindness,
and journey humbly with you.
Amen.

Blessing

The God who faithfully brings forth justice
and breaks the oppressor's rod
✠ bless, strengthen, and uphold you,
today and always.
Amen.

Sending Song

“Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises”

#535

Dismissal

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.
Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!
And all of Good Shepherd said,
AMEN!

Annual Meeting is Sunday, Jan. 29, 10 a.m.

If you have a recurring donation, please check to make sure it did not stop at the end of 2022. If you would like to set up a recurring donation and have questions, call the office.