

The First Sunday after the Epiphany - Year A January 12, 2014



What is striking in the readings for Christ's Baptism this week was the quietness of it all. There is no fanfare, no glitz and no loud, forceful declarations. God's affirmation of Christ, and the ministry of Jesus, are all rather quiet and subdued. This does not mean that proclamation does not happen, but that the proclamation of the Gospel happens less through loud, dramatic displays and more through gentle, quiet, ordinary encounters.

May we be inspired to live lives of quiet proclamation as we worship this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Isaiah 42:1-9: A prophecy of God's coming servant, who fulfils God's promise, and who will bring justice and comfort.

Psalms 29: An exhortation for the heavenly beings to give glory to God, for God's mighty, majestic voice.

Acts 10:34-43: Peter preaches about the Jesus who was baptised by John and empowered by God's Spirit, who taught about God's reign and did good, and who is now the judge of all and the one who brings forgiveness.

Matthew 3:13-17: Jesus appears at the Jordan and John hesitates to baptise him, but ultimately submits to Christ and baptises him. Then the heavens open, the Spirit descends on Jesus as a dove, and God's voice proclaims God's pleasure in Jesus.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2042:%201-9%0Acw%20Psalm%2029%0AActs%2010:%2034-43%0AMatthew%203:%2013-17

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
we beseech thee mercifully to receive
the prayers of thy people which call upon thee;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,

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and also may have grace and power
faithfully to fulfil the same;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus
revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
Grant to us, who are born of water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

For all bishops, deaconesses and pastors, that as a community of disciples, they might
bring light to the nations. Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For the world, that the light of Christ might dispel slander and wickedness,
bringing new life to broken relationships. Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For the baptized everywhere, that through word and action we might proclaim the one who
welcomes the rejected and despised. Good and faithful God,
Hear our prayer

For politicians, doctors, pastors, lawyers and all who have been entrusted with society's
respect, that they might walk humbly before their creator. Good and
faithful God,
Hear our prayer

For all in need of forgiveness, that reconciliation might be granted to them.
Good and faithful God,
Hear our prayer

For all who have gathered here, that we might together discover the risen Christ,
serving each other with joyous hearts. Good and faithful God,
Hear our prayer

For all who today receive God's grace in baptism, especially _____, that the oil of
anointing might remind them to offer their bodies continually as living sacrifices. Good and
faithful God,
Hear our prayer

For ourselves, that we might discern the Holy Spirit in those who are newly baptised and
welcome the renewal they offer, so that the church might be torn down where it is in error,
and built up where it proclaims good news. Good and faithful God,
Hear our prayer

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God of New Life, in baptism you have claimed us as your own. Fill us now with your Holy Spirit that we might proclaim your steadfast love to the world. Amen.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, and those in prison.
Lord, have mercy.

For the dying.
Lord, have mercy.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.
Lord, have mercy.

Let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. To you, O Lord.

Presider

Lord of the living and the dead, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast and allow us to eat and drink at the table of your Son; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Presider or deacon

As we celebrate the baptism of Christ, let us offer prayers to God who gives light to the nations and freedom to prisoners.

Deacon or other leader

By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan.
Lord, have mercy.

For our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.
Lord, have mercy.

For N,N,... our catechumen(s) and for their families and sponsors.
Lord, have mercy.

For all who seek Christ, and for the conversion of the whole human race.
Lord, have mercy.

For mercy, peace, and justice throughout the world
Lord, have mercy.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, and those in prison.
Lord, have mercy.

For the dying.
Lord, have mercy.

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For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

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Presider

Lord of the living and the dead, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast and allow us to eat and drink at the table of your Son; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Refreshed by these holy gifts, Lord God,
we seek your mercy:
that by listening faithfully to your only Son,
and being obedient to the prompting of the Spirit,
we may be your children in name and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Eternal Father, who declared Jesus our Lord to be your beloved Son at his baptism: grant that we and all who have become his members through baptism may rejoice to be your children and the servants of all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Let us pray [that we will be faithful to our baptismal calling.]

Almighty, eternal God, when the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan, you revealed him as your own beloved Son. Keep us, your children, born of water and the Spirit, faithful to our calling. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Eternal God, at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan you proclaimed him your Son, and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: grant that all who are baptised into his name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Saviour; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

God of grace and glory,
you call us with your voice of flame
to be your people, faithful and courageous.
As your beloved Son
embraced his mission in the waters of baptism,
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit
to join in his transforming work.
We ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

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who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Common Worship*

Heavenly father at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognise him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour *Common Worship Shorter Collect*

God our Redeemer, through Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in Baptism you have made us one in him. Deliver us from the death of sin and raise us to new life in Christ; for he is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Methodist Worship (Collect for Sunday after Epiphany and first in Ordinary)*

Eternal father, at the Baptism of Jesus, you revealed him to be your Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful to their calling as your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Worship (Collect for Sunday after Epiphany and first in Ordinary)*

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; though Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

May God the Father, and the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ, build us up in faith and truth and love, and grant us our portion among the saints with all those who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for all saints, for kings and rulers, for the enemies of the cross of Christ, and for ourselves we pray that our fruit may abound and we be made perfect in Christ Jesus our Lord. Polycarp.

Jesus, by your wounded feet direct our path. Jesus, by your nailed hands move us to deeds of love. Jesus, by your pierced side purify our desires. Jesus, by your crown of thorns annihilate our pride. Jesus by your broken heart, knit ours to yours. Amen. Richard Crawshaw, 1613-49

Lord, you know all that lies before us, both of duty and temptation. Keep us, we pray, from all things hurtful to the body and the soul. Strengthen within us all that is praiseworthy and true, and grant that nothing may come between us and your holy presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen *John Hunter, 1849-1917*

Holy Spirit of God, let us not seek you in the distant land, for you are here among us. Let us welcome you in the heart which is your dwelling place and let us rejoice in the glory of your presence, the only fountain of goodness and love. Amen. *Amy Carmichael, 1868-1951*

BENEDICTION

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Jesus, and as this new year commences and continues

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-may the light of God surround you,
-the love of Jesus draw you closer to Himself,
-and the power of the Spirit strengthen you and grant you joy,
both now and for evermore. Amen.
Go in peace

-and may the word of our God be made flesh in you
-may the light of God surround you,
-and the love of God fill you both now and for evermore. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES

Isaiah 42: 1-9

This is one of four poetic passages in the Book of Isaiah referred to as "The ServantSongs." They describe Israel's mission as God's servant people chosen to bring "light to the nations." They represent some of the most advanced theology of the Old Testament.

Though composed by an unknown prophet during Israel's exile in Babylon (586-539 BC), the early Christian church regarded these poems as prophecies about Jesus, the Messiah/

Christ. Some biblical scholars have suggested that Jesus himself adopted these ServantSongs as the pattern for his ministry which began with his baptism by John.

We often read backward into this lesson words about Jesus. Certainly, the words were written about someone who would save God's people, who would live the righteous life,

who would establish justice. We understand that person to be Jesus. Even if the writer of Second Isaiah did not know that it would be Jesus who would fulfil these qualifications,

clearly the one who was to come would embody what he understood to be quintessential qualities of God. We believe Jesus to be the one who has made all things new, who breathes life into the people again. We believe he has given new meaning to all life. We believe that he has "reinvented" the world and the way it is to interrelate.

Is it any wonder that we see Jesus calling us to carry out justice to all of creation? If God's justice is complete and transformative, is it not transformative for all of the creation? Does

not God call us to examine how we are consuming resources, the extent to which we create greenhouse gasses, the reasons we allow entire ecosystems to be destroyed?

God's light shines out in the darkness and puts a spotlight on how we live. Are we truly agents of transformation and justice? What in this new year can we do better?

Psalm 29

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In descriptive metaphors the psalmist 'sees' and 'hears' God during a fierce thunderstorm while worshipping in the temple. This causes the worshippers to praise the glory of God, envisioned as a monarch on a throne giving peace to his subjects.

Acts 10:34-43

The previous chapter had described the conversion of Saul, a Jewish rabbi. This chapter tells of Peter's conversion to the wider interpretation of the new faith. The gospel is for all people, not just those of the Jewish tradition. As a result of this experience, Peter preaches to a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles in the home of a Roman military officer. His new understanding of the faith is blessed by the Holy Spirit coming upon the assembly while Peter was still speaking.

Matthew 3:13-17

This simple story of Jesus' baptism by John contrasts the humility of the two. Jesus fully accepted John's ministry and insisted on being baptized by him. In Matthew's version of this incident only Jesus saw the Spirit descend as a dove and heard God's voice. It may be interpreted best as Jesus' ordination for his ministry.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The twin themes of proclamation and justice run through the readings this week. Isaiah prophesies the servant who fulfils God's previously proclaimed promise and who brings justice by proclamation without raising his voice, in word and action. The voice of God, which causes strong responses in creation, is praised in Psalm 29. In Acts, Peter's proclamation of the Gospel is the focus, and he points people to Jesus' own message, proclaimed and demonstrated in words and acts of compassion and justice. In the encounter with John, Jesus proclaims that what they do is in fulfilment of righteousness (what God requires) and then God proclaims Christ to be God's well-beloved son, in whom God delights. The beautiful challenge of these readings is that justice, God's reign, God's presence and God's salvation in Christ, must be proclaimed, and be seen to be proclaimed, for them to have impact and influence in our world. However, as Isaiah indicates, and Peter preaches, the proclamation is quiet, without a raised voice, and is shown to God's "hand-picked" witnesses who must then carry the message further. The Baptism of Christ, then, is for us a listening to God's proclamation of who Christ is, and what Christ has come to do. We are the witnesses to Christ. And then, it is also a call for us to be proclaimers, messengers, carrying what we have seen and experienced into the world in quiet, but significant, words and deeds.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: Some years ago there was an advert on South African television that began with a quiet voice saying "If you want to catch someone's attention, whisper!" This may be one way of seeing this week's theme. Although, the Baptism of Christ may be thought of as a dramatic event with lots of fanfare, and great supernatural proclamation, it appears that it was actually a rather quiet affair. Certainly, it did not create the kind of stir that would be expected if such an event was witnessed publicly. Rather, Matthew seems to

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indicate that only Jesus saw the dove and heard the voice, and directly after this event, Jesus is led into the wilderness – a place of seclusion and isolation. The other readings also indicate the power of quiet proclamation in word and deed, and the effect of Jesus' practice of such quiet proclamation, which still had very significant impact. In the same way, we who follow Christ and seek to influence the world in the direction of justice and love, would do well to allow our words to be quiet, and our proclamation to be as much in lives of gentle justice as in words of challenge. It may seem that such quiet proclamation can have little effect on our world, but in fact it is really the only thing that makes any significant difference. When my neighbours see justice in my life, when those around me are treated with compassion and dignity, when my giving, my ethics and my values all speak of God's reign and justice, then my world is made a little more whole, and the world is changed for the better. And when the numbers of people doing this grow, then the impact grows too. So, whatever issue you may seek to proclaim God's justice into, reflect on how you can adopt, at least in part, the strategy of Jesus' baptism – quiet proclamation.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Somehow Christianity seems to have become a religion of public words proclaimed loudly: from Christian billboards, to street evangelists complete with sandwich boards and bullhorns; from sports stars publicly making a show of kneeling and praying, to celebrity preachers; from political lobbying to religious media – you would think that the church would be growing in leaps and bounds. And yet, people seem to be deaf to our message and disinterested in our words. Perhaps that's because in all the noise, there is has been little action – a lot of shouting, but not much grace and love. Perhaps the word we need to hear from Jesus' baptism is that God seems to like quiet proclamation. No raised voice, no huge public displays (note Jesus' rejection of the temptations to this kind of attention grabbing). Rather, a quiet affirmation here, a gentle act of justice there, a constant lived love and grace that gently, but profoundly, touches and changes lives. I wonder if God might be calling communities of faith to this kind of quiet proclamation in their neighbourhoods: seeking to bring life and grace and love and justice, without expecting anything back (not even a commitment to attend on Sundays); giving a voice, where possible and necessary, to the voiceless and challenging whatever brings pain and destruction, but doing so with a strong, gentle, enacted message – not loud, emotive and actionless words. What might it mean for us to put our baptism into practice? What might it mean for us to take St. Francis' words seriously – “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.”

SERMON OUTLINE

Jesus came from Galilee to John

Jesus had been living quietly in Nazareth & now came to a significant moment in his life - at the Jordan....

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1. The Baptist 13-14: John had been preaching and baptising – preparing the way for the Lord... Now the Lord was here to be baptized by him – much to John's dismay! 14 John would have prevented him, saying, •I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?

He felt so unworthy – but note the humility and sense of propriety of Jesus:- 15 But Jesus answered him, Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.

Then he consented....

2. The Baptism -15-16: in the river Jordan – just as he came up from the water - something wonderful happened 16 when Jesus had been baptized...

a) visibly suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

b) vocally – 17 a voice from heaven – God the Father...

3. The Beloved 17: as the Father declares: •This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.

– thus verifying Jesus

a) Messiahship – Psalm 2.7 This is my son...

b) Mission – Isaiah 42.1 In whom I am well pleased... The account of Jesus baptism reminds us of the significance of our Baptism... May we ever be faithful to the vows and promises made & live daily for Jesus... By Norman Porteus

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"[The River](#)," the Rev. Dr. Bill Leonard, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/2540-the_river

"[Baptism Made Real](#)," the Rev. Randy Calvo, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1077-baptism_made_real

"All kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall do him service." [Psalm 72: 11]

By the Dean of Westminster, Very Rev Dr John Hall

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship/sermons/2010/january/sermon-given-atthe-epiphany-sung-eucharist-wednesday-6-january-2010>

From Bideford

A blog spot by a Methodist local preacher. Quotes from various writers - this preacher has done his homework!

<http://sermonsyc.blogspot.com/2006/12/best-and-worst-sermon-for-epiphany.html>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), The Baptism of the Lord, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/year-the-baptism-of-lord-january-12-2014.html>

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"Storypath Lectionary Links: Connecting Children's Literature with our Faith Story."

January 12, 2014, Union Presbyterian Seminary. Connections: Isaiah 42:1-9 and *The Little Duck* by Judy Dunn, Acts 10:34-43 and *You're All My Favorites* by Sam Bratney, .Matthew 3:13-17 and *There* by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick.

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/lectionary-links-sunday-january-12-2014/>

○

"Anointed with the Holy Spirit and With Power," First Sunday after the Epiphany, Lesson Plans that Work, *Episcopal Digital Network*

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/lessons/2013/11/10/anointed-with-the-holy-spirit-and-with-power/>

○

Proclaiming Faith, discussion, prayer, activities for primary grades, activities.

http://www.cyberfaith.com/proclaiming_faith.cfm

○

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing](#)

[O Thou Who Camest From Above](#)

[Sing Of God Made Manifest](#)

[Thou Whose Almighty Word](#)

[When Jesus Came To Jordan](#)

When morning gilds the skies (Tune Laudes Domini)

This is the day

Christ when for us you were baptised (Tune Saint Magnus)

When Jesus came to Jordan (Tune Cruger)

Thou whose almighty word (Tune Moscow)