



Resources for parish worship

19 January 2014

It is a joy and a blessing to be called by Christ – as we all are. Answering the call is not easy, however, and asks of us, as it did of Jesus, a commitment to giving of ourselves, to making the sacrifices – small and large – that allow the reign of God to be manifest in our lives and in our world. Sacrifice is not a popular word, but it is one that needs to be rediscovered if we are to address the massive challenges facing our world.

May our worship give us the courage and the faith to lay down our lives in service of Christ and God's reign again.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Isaiah 49:1-7: Isaiah's second servant song seems to refer to both an individual and to the nation of Israel. Either way the message is clear – the work is hard and leads to mockery and rejection, but God will make God's servant a light to the nations and will ultimately bring the servant praise and recognition.

Psalms 40:1-11: Praise for God's grace and rescue, and a commitment to serve God and proclaim God's justice.

1 Corinthians 1:1-9: God has gifted God's church with all they need to serve in partnership with God, and to remain strong until the return of Christ.

John 1:29-42: John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit, and two of John's disciples follow Jesus. One of them, Andrew, calls his brother Simon to meet Jesus, and Jesus names him Peter.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Isaiah%2049:1-7%0Acw%20Psalm%2040:1-12%0A1%20Corinthians%201:%201-9%0AJohn%201:%2029-42

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,
who dost govern all things in heaven and earth;
Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people,
and grant us thy peace all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
Transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

With all our heart and mind, let us pray to God, saying, "God of grace, be with us."

In this time of confusion, grief, vulnerability and loss, let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That those who serve you in all countries and all traditions may remember your love, embrace your forgiveness, and hold fast to your hope. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That the leaders of this nation, our government, parliament, and all others in authority, may be guided by your Wisdom, and find strength and courage to know and accomplish your purposes in the midst of the evil of these days. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That all peoples of the earth, especially those who suffer loss due to political or religious persecution or terrorism, may have the hope of healing. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That we as a nation, having experienced the terror and fear of this past week, may find unity of purpose not in revenge but in rebuilding our hope and healing the pain of the common tragedy which unites us. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That we in this community who have lost loved ones, colleagues, and friends in the tragedies of New York City and Washington, D.C., may be embraced with your love and healing grace through the embrace and care of Christ Church and all communities who profess to be your body in this world. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

That those who have died may find peace and joy among the communion of saints. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

God whose vision spans all the ages of the earth, help us to see beyond this moment and to embrace the wider perspective of your whole creation. Deliver us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge, and lead us into a way of love and justice that makes room for all peoples. Let us pray to God, **God of grace, be with us.**

POST COMMUNION

God of glory,
you nourish us with bread from heaven.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Living God, in Christ you make all things new. Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Collect for 2nd in Ordinary*

Almighty God, by whose grace alone we are accepted and called to your service, strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of our calling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. *Methodist Collect for 2nd in Ordinary*

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence; renew your people with you heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and

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

God of all mercy your Son proclaimed the good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed: anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord. Amen. *Common Worship*

Increase your grace in us, O Lord, that we may fear your Name beyond which nothing is more holy; that we may love you, beyond whom nothing is more loveable; that we may glorify you beyond whom nothing is more worthy of praise, and that we may long for you beyond whom nothing is more desirable; and grant that thus fearing, loving, glorifying and longing we may see you, face to face; through Christ our Lord. Amen *Desiderius Erasmus, 1466-1536*

Give thanks for the joy of human love and friendship
Take from me, O Lord, all desire for worldly praise and all uncontrolled anger and remorse. Give to me a humble and lowly heart, and a mind tender with kindness and compassion. Grant to me also, good Lord, fullness of faith, firmness of hope and fervency of love, that my one desire may be conformity to your gracious will; through Christ our Lord. Amen *Thomas More, 1478-1535*

For world peace - God our Father, as the rainbow spans the heavens when the sky is dark, so our strife and enmities stand under the judgement and promise of your over-arching love and righteousness. We praise you for signs of hope and for the fact that enemies can become friends. As your Holy Spirit draws the scattered flock of Christ together so may the nations find a unity that eliminates war. Help all who look to Christ to identify the common enemies of humanity - poverty, hunger, disease and injustice - and work to create the structures of peace, for his sake. Amen

Kenneth Greet, Methodist Peace Fellowship

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Following on from Jesus' baptism, his mission is now proclaimed and affirmed in the readings this week. The prophetic song of Isaiah's servant holds

challenging foreshadows of Christ's sacrificial life. The psalmist's commitment to serve God is echoed in Jesus' own ministry, as is God's gifting of followers of Christ in God's church. Finally, as John testifies, Jesus is the one who leads people into transforming encounters with God (baptism in the Holy Spirit) and who is the "Lamb of God" who will be sacrificed for all people. The Scriptures this week hold Christ up for us as the example of one who is called, and one who has responded to that call, and is committed enough to make profound sacrifices in service of God's reign. Like the first disciples, we also find ourselves called, and needing to respond and commit. Along with the call is God's equipping – the hope of God's ultimate glory (as reflected in the Psalm and Isaiah), the Baptism of the Holy Spirit given by Christ and the gifts God has given to God's church, spoken of by Paul. If God's reign of justice and love is to find a place on the earth, it will be through faithful, sacrificial followers of Christ who have responded willingly to God's call.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It seems amazing to say it, but one of the most significant shifts that needs to be made in the world is for every person and organisation to recognise their part (their calling) in addressing the great challenges we face, and to embrace the necessary sacrifices required to bring about justice. On a global scale this involves wealthy nations making such changes as doing away with trade restrictions and unjust trade subsidies and requirements in order to level the playing field for poorer, less powerful nations. It may involve refusing to use sweat shops, and doing the necessary checks to ensure that producers of the products we import and sell are treating their workers fairly. It may mean cancelling third world debt, and prioritising health care and getting medicine to those who need it over the profits that can be made through these medicines. It may also mean, for those who live in poorer countries, addressing the corruption and lack of accountability that sometimes plagues aid in these countries. These are just some thoughts, but if we are truly to follow the Lamb of God, it will not be without significant commitment and sacrifice. As we work for these changes, we may be mocked and threatened, labelled and rejected. But, ultimately, as the world's systems change, so God's reign is manifest, and God's life is made available to all.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Answering the call to follow the Lamb of God, as Andrew and Peter did, is a daily decision made in the little details of how much we consume, what and how we buy, what we drive, where we live, what we eat, how we use energy, how we work, how we treat others and how we care for ourselves. Many of these decisions result in sacrifices that we would probably prefer to avoid. At its heart discipleship is about recognising that our faith is not an individual journey, but is connected into community. Our choice

to sacrifice or not impacts others in our churches, neighbourhoods and world, and so we find that as we follow Christ, we are brought face to face with others, and the impact of our choices and lifestyle on them. To make the sacrificial changes that will lead to a more just world – the world that Jesus proclaimed – we need resources beyond ourselves. For this it takes both the recognition that the Christ we are called to follow is the Lamb of God who calls us to take up our crosses, and an openness to receive the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” – the transforming, empowering encounter with God – that John said Jesus would offer. But as we embrace the life of sacrifice and of following Christ, we each become foundations stones – Peters, rocks – in the reign of God being built among us.

SERMON OUTLINE

God with us

On this Sunday each year, the Sunday after Epiphany, we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of Jesus. Jesus comes to the River Jordan to be baptised.

There is often debate among theological scholars about whether things in the Bible actually happened exactly as they are reported. Nevertheless even the most skeptical of scholars believe that the episode today in which Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist must have taken place. It is hard to imagine the early church making up the story of Jesus’ baptism; it was too much of an embarrassment to them.

John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance, confession, and forgiveness of sins. From some of the first earliest documents written by Christians we know they believed in the sinlessness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). These two facts seem to contradict each other. If Jesus was sinless there would have been no need for him to submit to a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sins. John recognised this point himself and tried to persuade Jesus not to bother. There is a significant contrast between Jesus’ willingness to be baptised when he did not need to be and the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ refusal to repent when they needed to.

This strikes right at the heart of what the whole ministry of Jesus is about. On the 4th. Sunday of Advent we heard about the dream Joseph had. In it he was told the true identity of the child Mary was carrying. The child would be called, "Emmanuel, God with us." Now we begin to find out exactly what that means. God is with us and he goes the whole way. God is not like an absent military General who gives orders from a bomb proof bunker. He marches alongside the troops and shares the same dangers and trials. God does not address sinners from a safe distance, he gets his hands dirty and joins our sinful and world. In Jesus God was not sending another messenger, this time he is coming alongside us himself!

Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about the baptism is that Jesus shows the attitude of God towards us sinners. If God was human he would stand at the side of the river and criticise the miserable lot who turned up. Jesus shows just how different God is from us. Instead of condemning the sinners, Jesus jumps into the water with them. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus is showing what his attitude is going to be. It is not one of self righteousness and criticism, but rather of forgiveness and acceptance. Jesus is not 'God above us' or 'God better than us' Jesus is instead Emmanuel 'God with us.' Jesus stands alongside us in human life, he is flesh like our flesh and with baptism in the cleansing waters, he associates himself totally with humankind.

And so Jesus came on that day and entered the water. In Matthew's account of the baptism, Jesus enters the water and the heavens open, then the Spirit of God descends like a dove and a voice from heaven speaks words over Jesus "This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The appearance of the symbolic dove has occasioned much speculation. Since Tertullian it has often been connected with Noah's dove: the former dove announced deliverance from the flood, the latter dove deliverance from sins (cf. 1 Pet 3:20–1).

The words from heaven are very similar to the ones we hear in the passage from the prophet Isaiah, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit

upon him." The words are given not just for Jesus, but for all who were there. It was a message from God to them. As the presence of Jesus puts the stamp of approval on what John is doing, so now the presence of the Spirit shows the approval of God on what Jesus is doing. Moreover, soon the Spirit will descend not just on Jesus, but on all who follow into baptismal waters.

We might see this humble submission as a foreshadowing of the "baptism" of his bloody death upon the cross. Jesus' baptism is his submission entirely to his Father's will. Out of love he consented to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. Now it is for us to enter into that same acceptance of the will of God for us. In Romans Chapter 6:4 The Apostle Paul tells us 'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Jesus is still Emmanuel, God with us. He gives us his Spirit so that we are not left alone throughout our lives. Now we must follow his example, as we ask the Holy Spirit to forge this same attitude of humility and obedience in our hearts. Perhaps as we do a part of heaven will heaven will open for us as well.

Charles Royden

Additional Material about Hunt

Hunt spent about 10 days on the edge of the sea painting in the landscape and making sketches and notes. He took a white goat with him but he left blank that part of the picture that the animal occupies and did not paint the beast until he returned to his Jerusalem studio. Whilst at Osdoo, Hunt's life was at risk from hostile tribesmen. The insistence of his guides that they get away from this dangerous spot led to his leaving earlier than he wished. He took back samples of mud and salt to help him finish the foreground. In Jerusalem Hunt also bought or borrowed sheep and goat skulls and a full camel skeleton.

'William Holman Hunt , to Thomas Miller of Preston 31st March 1856

I beg to write to inform you that I have brought back with me a picture which altho' not a figure subject I feel it necessary to submit to you before sending in day when I have to show it to several

friends who will then visit my studio.

The subject is the "Scapegoat" as suggested by the description of the ceremony on the day of Atonement in Leviticus XVI and the particular passage, "And the goat shall bear upon him all the iniquities unto a land not inhabited." When in Jerusalem it recommended itself to me as one which — with the opportunity I had of choosing an appropriate scene from Nature as a background, demanded illustration as the most evident type in the old Law of our afflicted Saviour and accordingly I made a journey along the plain of the Dead Sea to select a fitting spot which I decided upon at Asdoom and where I returned with all proper materials and located myself until I had painted the Mountains of Edom and the lake and salt encrusted marsh below.

I found an interesting account of the manner in which the ceremony was performed in the Talmud which supplied me with some additional hints...

I have supposed the goat to have been wandering three days, driven from all resting places within sight of man to this desolate region — which is the probable site of Sodom — and there while the sun is sinking and the full moon is rising behind the reddened Eastern Mountains the weary animal has turned towards some calm land locked water, from the shore on to the treacherous surface of salt from which he is now with little hope attempting to extricate himself, but this point I have left unexpressed seeing that the Bible is silent on the ultimate fate of the sin burthened animal...

The picture is 55 inches in length and 34 inches in height and the price I have to ask for it exclusive of copyright is 450 Guineas.'

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

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

On John the Baptist - "John the Baptizer scares me, always has. He is so prophetic, a formidable presence from the beginning, kicking to high heaven in his mama's belly when the pregnant virgin Mary comes to visit, celebrating the embryonic presence of cousin Jesus before either of them entered the world. "

http://day1.org/2541-pursuing_the_prophetic

www.churchnewsireland.org

["What Are You Looking For?"](http://day1.org/1078-what-are-you-looking-for) the Rev. Dr. Catherine Taylor, *Day 1*
<http://day1.org/1078-what-are-you-looking-for>

Power in Weakness by [Walter Brueggemann](#)

Jesus appears as "the Lamb of God," the one offered as a valuable sacrifice (John 1:29, 36). By the end of the paragraph, the Lamb is recognized as the awaited Messiah, the one who will enact all the ancient expectations of Israel. The twinning of "Lamb" and "Messiah" evidences the way in which Jesus, from the outset, is seen as power-in-weakness, as authority-in-vulnerability, the newness that will confound the authorities of the world and make newness possible.

The church's task is to let the world have access to this power-in-weakness that will transform reality. Thus the Isaiah text witnesses that God gives Israel and then Jesus as light to the world and as salvation to the ends of the earth (49:6), salvation that extends into every venue of need in the world. The psalm expresses thanksgiving to God for rescue. In this context the great rescue of the world is what God has done in and through Jesus. The outcome is the "glad news" that is told in public (verse 9) concerning God's faithfulness and steadfast love.

The event of Jesus shows God to be eagerly invested in the life of the world. In John's gospel, the summoning of Peter (John 1:41) shows that Jesus initiates a movement in the world that is the gathering of all those who will live in "abundance" with "spiritual gifts" until his rule is complete (1 Corinthians 1:2, 7, 8).

This series on Sojourners web covers the Season of Epiphany -

<http://sojo.net/magazine/2011/01/walking-light-world>

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Epiphany 2, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/year-second-sunday-after-epiphany.html>

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany Year A 19 January 2014

[Coloring Pages/Puzzles](#). Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com. (Scroll to bottom of page.)

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

[Lectionary Puzzles](#), Epiphany 2. Word search puzzles in RTF or plain text, by Reg McMillan, St.Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Peterborough, Ontario.

<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/in-awjj.htm#ep02>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

[A Charge To Keep I Have](#)

[O Loving Lord, Who Art Forever Seeking](#)

[The Church's One Foundation](#)

[Jesus Calls Us! O'er The Tumult](#)

[Hail Thou Once Despised Jesus](#)

Crown him with many crowns

Your mercy flows upon us like a river (On Partnership News)

It is a thing most wonderful (Tune Heronsgate)

I will sing the wondrous story (Tune Hyfrydol)