

First Sunday After the Epiphany
Occasion: The Baptism of our Lord
Sunday, January 12, 2020
Year (cycle): A

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection Question\(s\)³](#)

[Art Reflection Slideshow⁴](#)

**Note: Due to "optional readings," Passage summaries and Slideshows do not always fully correspond with the chosen readings for a given week. Disregard or expand your study when this is the case.*

The Collect:

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Reading 1

Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-9

- 1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
- 2 He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
- 3 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- 4 He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
- 5 Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,

who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:

6 I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,

7 to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

8 I am the Lord, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.

9 See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Isaiah 42:1-9

In this passage, we read one of the four servant songs of Isaiah. Israel is portrayed as the servant, whom God loves, and through whom God will bless all the nations. God is described as the powerful creator of the heaven and the earth, who is worthy of glory and praise. Yet this God is close enough to take the people by the hand and to hold them. How beautiful are the words from the opening line, “my chosen, in whom my soul delights.” These are words of belonging that many long to hear, whether from parents, spouses/partners, children, or friends. My soul delights in you, says God, and nothing will get in the way of that love. In addition to covenantal language, this passage is also a commissioning for the work set out for Israel. We are told that Israel will not cry out in the streets, grow faint, or be crushed as they do the work of bringing justice to all the world. Bring sight to the blind God says, bring prisoners out from the dungeons. Through your work, I will make you a light to the nations. God does not take justice lightly, but as we hear in this passage, it is in fact work God has called us to. It might resonate with our post-communion prayer,

“send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord...”

- What images or feelings come to mind when you think about God’s soul delighting in you?
- Can you think of a time that God blessed you through others or when others were blessed through you? Where was God in those moments?
- When you think of bringing justice to the world what work comes to mind?
- What part of justice-making might God be calling you to you?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 2

Psalm: Psalm 29

- 1 Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, *
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name; *
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; *
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; *
the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; *
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, *
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the Lord splits the flames of fire;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; *
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe *
and strips the forests bare.
- 9 And in the temple of the Lord *
all are crying, "Glory!"
- 10 The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; *
the Lord sits enthroned as King for evermore.

11 The Lord shall give strength to his people; *
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Psalm 29

Psalm 29 contains vivid imagery of what God's voice looks and sounds like: thunder, mighty waters, flames, writhing oak trees. These images speak of a God who cannot be contained nor controlled. This is a voice of power and might, and we are told to "Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his name." Yet in the last verse we hear a switch from a description of God's being to God's plans. What does God intend to do with all God's strength? To give it to the people, that they may be strengthened and find peace. This psalm may bring to mind the story of Elijah, when God came to him not in the wind or fire, but as a still small voice. It may even bring to mind the story of the Good Shepherd when we hear of God calling each sheep by name. God's voice is indeed one of unimaginable power, but through God's love it is a voice that we can hear and respond to as well.

- What does God's voice sound like to you?
- Where do you hear God's voice?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 3

Epistle: Acts 10:34-43

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from

the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Acts 10:34-43

This passage is a snippet from Peter's visit to Cornelius and his household in Caesarea. We hear Peter give an account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Most importantly Peter speaks of God's lack of partiality and that the good news of Christ is available to all who believe. It can be difficult at times to accept that it is God who calls disciples, and not we ourselves. It is important to remember that we must work alongside all the members of the body of Christ, even those we disagree with in order to do God's work. Peter also speaks of those who ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection and then of the apostles commissioning to preach. Even through death, Jesus was still with his disciples, just as he is still with us as we gather to pray and eat together.

- Where have you encountered the risen Christ?
- Where might God be calling you to share your story of encountering Jesus?
- Are there moments you wish God showed partiality? How can you come closer to those within your faith that you disagree with?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Reading 4

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. 14John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' 15But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. 16And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection Question(s): Matthew 3:13-17

This passage follows John's preaching of Isaiah, "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." When Jesus gets to the river Jordan John, recognizing who Jesus is, states that it should be Jesus who baptizes him, not the other way around. This is just the beginning of Jesus' work and ministry and already he is turning everything upside down and inside out. We will be doing things differently Jesus seems to say. It is through this new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit comes down like a dove and we hear the words of heaven, "This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus' baptism marks his time to begin his work in the world around him, just as our own baptism call us into the life, death, and resurrection of our own lives. It is time to remember Jesus' baptism and our own. You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, you are a beloved one of God. Just as Jesus turned the world upside down, how might you through your baptism join in the work of God?

- Where were you baptized? Who was there? Do you remember it?
- Read through the baptismal covenant in the Book of Common Prayer. What parts stand out to you and why?
- Have you felt the Holy Spirit as closely as the dove was seen at Jesus' baptism? What does God's voice sound like when God calls you beloved?

[Link to Art Reflection Slideshow](#)

Sources

¹ “First Sunday after the Epiphany, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/epiphany-1a>

² Chris Haslam, “The Baptism of the Lord-January 12, 2020,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/apr01m.shtml?>

³Regan Gonzalez., “Epiphany 1 (A)-January 12, 2020”, *Bible Study*, <https://episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-epiphany-1-january-12-2020>

⁴ The Revised Common Lectionary, “Year A, Year B, Year C,” *Slideshow Formats*, <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/slides.php>