

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday, January 18, 2026

Introduction to the day

Today's gospel opens with further reflection on Jesus' baptism. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the one anointed by the Spirit. In the liturgy we come and see Christ revealed among us in word and meal. We go forth to invite others to come and worship the Holy One and to receive the gifts of grace and peace made known among us.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

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.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 49:1-7

Here the servant, identified as Israel, speaks for herself and describes her honored mission. Called before her birth like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, the servant is not only to restore Israel. The servant's ultimate assignment is to bring news of God's victory to the ends of the earth. God in faithfulness has chosen Israel for this task.

PSALM: Psalm 40:1-11

I love to do your will, O my God. (Ps. 40:8)

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Though God's church in Corinth is a fractious congregation beset with many conflicts, Paul opens this letter by spotlighting the multiple ways God has enriched and sustained its life as part of the divine call into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL: John 1:29-42

John the Baptist's witness to Jesus initiates a chain of testimony as his disciples begin to share with others what they have found.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY - Then Knowing Begins

There is a whole lot written about *knowing* in this gospel's pithy account of Jesus' debut. There is, for that matter, a lot written about knowing throughout John's gospel; it's part of this book of the Bible's particularity. But take note: Before any claims of knowing are dashed into this memoir, John the Baptizer bothers to reveal that there was, for him, a time before knowing—a time when he did not know Jesus. This little and perhaps overlooked detail, "I myself did not know him" (John 1:31), is like sugar water in a hummingbird feeder: a sweet invitation or coaxing to come, taste and see what is good.

That admission from John lures readers and hearers to pay attention not simply to events: the arrival of Jesus on the scene, his walking toward John, the act of baptizing with water, or even

the flamboyant descent of a dove. These are descriptive details, but they are not the essence of what soon will overtake John and others—an invitation to know Jesus.

The difference between knowing *about* Jesus and knowing Jesus is tucked in and all around this gospel text that leads initially to the Baptizer and then moves onto a pathway beyond him. Yes, Jesus is introduced as “Lamb of God.” Yes, like a dove, the Spirit was seen descending. Vivid, symbolic details, for sure, about one coming to take away sin. But it is afterward, in Andrew and Simon’s curiosity and willingness to follow, when Jesus asks “What are you looking for?” and urges them to “come and see,” when they begin to stay together—they with Jesus and he with them—that knowing Jesus overtakes them and they fall into the grace of what he comes to take away and what he comes to give.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As God’s beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

Gracious God, gather the church into one great fellowship. Equip your people to work together for justice and peace, following the example of Martin Luther King Jr., renewer of society, whose birth we remember this week. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Creating God, sustain the web of life on this planet. Protect wild places, endangered species, and vulnerable habitats. Come to the aid of those affected by natural disasters. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Just God, you desire respect and equality for everyone. Raise up prophets who speak truth to the nations. Embolden leaders and those in authority to advocate for people in need. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Healing God, you lift up those who are bowed down by trouble, oppression, or illness especially Delmer Byers, Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Barbara Kant, Glenda Panke, Marilyn Schneider, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Bring an end to social injustice and inequities of every kind, so that all people may have abundant life. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Abiding God, you are present with this congregation. Keep us mindful of our mission and guide our ministries in this community. Kindle in us a desire to help one another. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Faithful God, you promise to be with us always. We remember with gratitude the faithful departed who now rest in you. Strengthen us to the end, that we may see you face to face. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

BLESSING (ELW p. 114)

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG *O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!* (ELW 308) 6

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

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