

Worship Service
First Sunday of Epiphany – January 10, 2021
St. Christopher-by-the-Sea
Gibson Island, Maryland

Introduction – The Rev. Charles Rowins

Hymn 124, stanzas 1 and 5

What star is this

Minister: Blessed by God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

People: *And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.*

Minister: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Song of Praise

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you,
we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.*

*For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

Collect for First Sunday after Epiphany

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

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.*

First Reading: Genesis 1:1-5 – see lesson insert

Psalm 29 – see lesson insert

Second Reading: Acts 19:1-7 – see lesson insert

Hymn 127, stanzas 1-3

Earth has many a noble city

Gospel: Mark 1:4-11 – see lesson insert

Sermon – The Rev. Charles Rowins

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father,
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;
That we all may be one.

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;
That your Name may be glorified by all people.

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;
That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;
That there may be justice and peace on the earth.

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;
That our works may find favor in your sight.

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;
That they may be delivered from their distress.

Give to the departed eternal rest;
Let light perpetual shine upon them.

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;
May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

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Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Confession

Most merciful God,
We confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

Absolution

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

Announcements and *America*

*My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by thy might, great God, our King.*

Prayer of St. Chrysostom

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication unto thee, and has promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

Hymn 135, stanzas 1 and 3

Songs of thankfulness and praise

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Sermon preached by The Rev. Charles Rowins at St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland, First Sunday of Epiphany, January 10, 2021.

As of this past Wednesday, we are in the Season of Epiphany, a time when we renew our efforts to share the Good News.

The word “epiphany” means to “show forth.” In other words, practice what we preach. We talk a good game, and we live a good game, and we happily share that good feeling. At least, that is the aim. And, more than an aim, that is our promise, either by a godparent at our baptism or we ourselves at our baptism.

Most of us have made that public commitment. We’re on record, as it were. Not a casual commitment, but a heart-felt commitment. We are grateful that God cared enough about the Creation gone astray to put things right.

Now, God putting things right is one thing, and it’s an essential part of the equation. But we have the same responsibility. Not on behalf of the whole Creation, but definitely on behalf of that part of the Creation that we can influence.

Which takes me to the playoffs of the National Football League that start today and to one of the quarterbacks who will be featured. His name is Baker Mayfield.

In addition to his play on the field, Baker stars in television commercials. My favorite is “preparing for rain.” With two seat covers, he sets about covering thousands of stadium seats before the rain arrives. Of course, such a gesture is futile. Too many seats, not enough help. Tempting to do nothing rather than do the impossible.

But, there’s another option, isn’t there. Take responsibility for covering, not thousands of seats, but perhaps dozens of seats. In other words, do what you can. Make a dent. This is Epiphany.

Now, instead of stadium seats, think of human needs. Clearly too many for any one person to address. But isn’t it better to do what we can, namely to make a dent? This is what this Season is all about. It’s time to take our custodial role seriously, which is another way of expressing our baptismal responsibility. We’re not going to heal the Creation all by ourselves, but we can help heal our piece of the Creation. Maybe it’s just two stadium seats because that’s all the

seat covers we have. Whatever our individual gifts are, we can employ them to make the Creation a better place.

You know the phrase “Count your blessings.” In the commercial, Baker has two seat covers. They can be a blessing for someone. And maybe more. Who knows who might be watching and gets inspired to make his or her own dent.

The birth of Christ is a wonderful gift. Like no other. It’s no accident that the Season of Epiphany follows the Christmas Season. The Christ Child is intended not just for you and me as individuals, but as the gift that keeps on giving. Assuming that we share that gift. In that way, more seats will be covered, more human needs will be met. We won’t know until we try.

Epiphany is about trying. Using today’s language from Genesis (**Genesis 1:1-5**), Epiphany is about sharing the Light. Protect those seats from Darkness, by covering them with Light.

Today’s Psalm (**Psalm 29**) has 11 verses. The first 10 describe the Glory of the Lord. These verses are descriptions of the awesome power of God. Remember these nouns and verbs: strength, thunders, splendor, breaks, makes, shakes, cries, beauty, holiness, enthroned. Nothing mild about these awesome characteristics of the Lord.

But look at verse 11. “The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.”

For ten verses, it’s all about the Creator. Then suddenly it’s about you and me. We don’t “thunder.” We make dents. At least we make them if we care to. Our power individually is limited. But, with God at our side, our collective efforts are huge. Epiphany is a Season to assess what we are capable of as individuals and what we are capable of as a community of believers.

From today’s lesson from the Acts of the Apostles (**Acts 19:1-7**): “When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – altogether there were about twelve of them.”

Well, we are more than twelve, even with restrictions, all because the Holy Spirit came upon those who paved the way for us. And, if we were to look closely at our own experiences, perhaps because you and I are filled with the Spirit as well.

Which takes us to today's gospel (**Mark 1:4-11**). John the Baptist announces that "he, John, has baptized with water, but there is one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." And guess who that might be.

Jesus of Nazareth comes to the Jordan and asks to be baptized. John knows who this Jesus is. And, once baptized himself, he, Jesus, won't baptize others just with water, but with the Holy Spirit.

You and I fit in this Story somewhere, somehow. And it's not just a Story. It's a life experience with a purpose. Namely, that we, in our own way, and with our own set of gifts, are expected to make a positive difference in the lives of family, neighbors and strangers.

In the commercial, Baker's gifts are a limited number of seat coverings. What are our gifts? What kind of dent in the needs of others can we make? Knowing you all, you have already asked yourself this question, and you are responding. For you, the Season of Epiphany is not theoretical. It is actual. You know first hand something about the Covenant that today's Collect describes. "Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior."

Our baptism is a covenant. In thanksgiving for the blessing of God's love, including and especially in Jesus, we are expected to make a positive dent in the lives of others. We are Baker Mayfield protecting the stadium seats to the best of our ability. Our efforts won't be in the thousands of seats, but perhaps in a single row. The theme of final hymn today is "making manifest," expressing our faith in concrete ways, doing what we can do, applying the gifts that we have.

The Season of Epiphany. It doesn't get all the headlines. But maybe that's because Epiphany is where the heavy-lifting takes place. You and I are called on to be lifters, to make a dent, to fulfill a baptismal covenant. God will use these gifts in ways that we might never realize or understand. But, as God trusts us to try, we need to trust God to fulfill.

Amen.

Lessons for First Sunday after the Epiphany – January 10, 2021

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.*

First Reading: Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Psalm 29

Ascribe to the Lord, you gods,

ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his Name;

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;

the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice;

the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees;

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,

and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.

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.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forest bare.
And in the temple of the Lord
all are crying, "Glory!"
The Lord sits enthroned above the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as King for evermore.
The Lord shall give strength to his people;
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of Peace.

Second Reading: Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, tell the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied – altogether there were about twelve of them.

Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Hymns for First Sunday of Epiphany – January 10, 2021

Hymn 124, stanzas 1 and 5

What star is this

What star is this, with beams so bright,
more beautiful than the noon-day light?
It shines to herald forth the King,
and Gentiles to his crib to bring.

To God the Father, heavenly Light,
to Christ, revealed in earthly night,
to God the Holy Ghost we raise
our equal and unceasing praise.

Hymn 127, stanzas 1-3

Earth has many a noble city

Earth has many a noble city; Bethlehem, thou dost all excel:
out of thee the Lord from heaven came to rule his Israel.

Fairer than the sun at morning was the star that told his birth,
to the world its God announcing seen in fleshly form on earth.

Eastern sages at his cradle make oblations rich and rare;
see them give, in deep devotion, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Hymn 135, stanzas 1 and 3

Songs of thankfulness and praise

Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord to thee we raise,
manifested by the star to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem in thy birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in man made manifest.

Manifest in making whole palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight, quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will, every bringing good from ill;
anthems be to thee addressed, God in man made manifest.