

The Baptism of Our Lord January 7, 2018

Epiphany, January 6 Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

Available on line at:

www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies

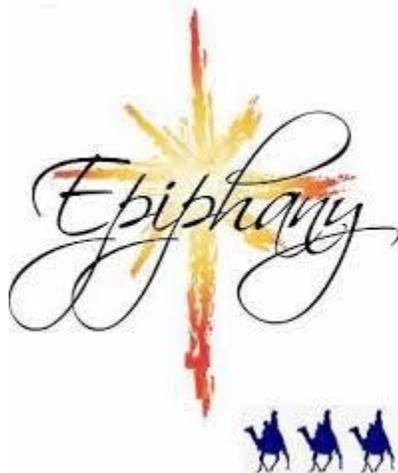
or

**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

January 4, 2018 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134

Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.



<http://www.epiphanyforestville.org/>



<https://www.stainedglassinc.com/window/5408-baptism-of-the-flesh/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 406/407 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed

“To Jordan came the Christ, our Lord”

This hymn appeared in several early American Lutheran hymnals. It disappeared from TLH and reappeared with the Lutheran book of Worship and the hymnals that followed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmDzL03cs_E “Martin Luther: hymns, ballads, chants and truths” Concordia Publishing House

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3VTuJ3uq8o> Video created for Ash Wednesday Worship, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Atwater, CA

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Depending of the day of Christmas, the liturgical calendar can become crowded with so many important events, that we run out of Sundays. After all, Ash Wednesday this year is February 14 and there is a lot to hear before then. Next year Epiphany will be on a Sunday, so then the Living the Lutheran Lectionary lesson will concentrate on the Epiphany readings. If you can't wait a year, they are referenced in this lesson.

“Why the Epiphany is so important — a Lutheran perspective...

Twelfth Night is approaching. January 6 is the Feast of the Epiphany, and many Christians remember this day as the one where Gentiles, the Magi — the Wise Men — visited Jesus, following the ‘star in the East’. Their journey is likely to have taken several months, not 12 days, over difficult terrain.

St Paul’s Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) of Kingsville, Maryland, has a short but informative précis of Epiphany. Excerpts below, emphases mine:

WHAT IS THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD?

The Epiphany of our Lord is the wonderful liturgical festival observed on January 6. It is the oldest of the Christmas festivals and originally the most important. Since January 6 is most often a weekday, Lutherans and liturgical Protestants sometimes shift the celebration of Epiphany to the Sunday immediately following the 6th. Epiphany is also a season that lasts until the beginning of Lent and encompasses four to nine Sundays, depending on the date of Easter.

WHAT DOES THE WORD “EPIPHANY” MEAN?

The word epiphany comes from the Greek noun epiphaneia, which means “shining forth,” “manifestation,” or “revelation.” In the ancient Greco-Roman world, an epiphany referred to the appearance of one of the gods to mortals. Since Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors were considered by many to be gods, the word epiphany was also used as a term for divine majesty. The Epiphany of our Lord is the Christian festival that celebrates the many ways through signs, miracles, and preaching that Jesus revealed Himself to the world as Christ, God Incarnate, and King of kings.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH COMMEMORATE DURING EPIPHANY?

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord originally commemorated three incidents that manifested the mission and divinity of Christ: the visit of the Magi ([Matthew 2:1-12](#)), the baptism of Jesus ([Mark 1:9-11](#)), and the miracle at Cana ([John 2:1-11](#)). Nowadays, most liturgical churches emphasize the visit of the Magi on January 6th and celebrate Christ's baptism on the first Sunday after the 6th.

WHY IS EPIPHANY SUCH A SPECIAL DAY AND SEASON?

Epiphany is one of the most important festivals of the liturgical year because it shows the church how God comes to His people. We are so full of sin and deserving of divine punishment that we cannot hope to approach God. Knowing that we cannot come to Him, God took the initiative and came to us by becoming one of us. The most holy and almighty God condescended to take on human flesh in order to reveal His salvation to the world. This is the mystery of the Epiphany of our Lord ...

In between the two Sundays that mark the Lord's baptism and transfiguration, the church concentrates on several of the other incidents from Scripture that show how Jesus manifested God's love to the world through His ministry of preaching, miracles, and healings. What is common to each of these epiphanies is that in one way or another they make known the identity and mission of Jesus Christ: True Man and True God, born into this sinful world to be the Lord and Savior of all humanity..."

<https://churchmousec.wordpress.com/2014/01/04/why-the-epiphany-is-so-important-a-lutheran-perspective/> Churchmouse Campanologist supports orthodox Christianity in mainline Protestant churches. It also exposes falsehoods arising from outside influences such as progressivism and secularism. If you would like to search for a particular topic, please consult the [handy reference guide](#). For advice on receiving Communion in churches other than your own, [please refer to this page](#).

Epiphany: Isaiah 60:1-6, Baptism of our Lord: Gen 1:1-5; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same readings (Next Week: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20); RCL, the same reading)

"Both the Old and New Testament texts focus on "firsts."

The Old Testament lesson is part of a creation narrative, and the New Testament text is the beginning of Jesus' ministry marked by his baptism. This week gives us the unique opportunity to explore both of these texts together in order to speak of what we believe and why we believe it..."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=220 **Beth L. Tanner**
Professor of Old Testament, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ



<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/genesis-1-kjv/>

The Creation of the World

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

“...And what does this very-familiar passage have to do with the baptism of Jesus, which we celebrate in these early January days? Well, perhaps more than a first reading.

We encounter elemental things in both the Genesis and Mark readings for today: water, wind, darkness, light. The Spirit of God (*ruach elohim*) that broods over the face of the waters at the beginning of creation descends on Jesus as he comes out of the waters of the Jordan. The voice that says, “Let there be light” at the beginning of time now declares, “You are my Son, the Beloved. With you I am well pleased.”

...Here’s the thing to remember, as you preach this wild and wonderful text on this Sunday of the Baptism of our Lord: The God who calls forth life from the primordial waters is the same God who calls us to new birth in the waters of baptism...

The Spirit who broods over the primordial waters descends on Jesus in the waters of the Jordan and names him “Beloved.” That same Spirit then drives him out into the wilderness, the wild and wasteland (Mark 1:12). In the waters of baptism, God names us “Beloved,” and then calls us to live out our new birth in this wild and beautiful world that God loves so much. We do so as children of God, in the name of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2328 [Kathryn M. Schifferdecker](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn



<http://thethoughtsofasimpleman.com/psalm-29/>

Epiphany, Psalm 72:1-11 (12-15), Baptism of Our Lord, Psalm 29; RCL, Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14, Psalm 29 (Psalm 139:1-10: RCL, Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18)

A storm scene from our home on Woman Lake in northern Minnesota:

“As I write these lines, looking out across the lake, I notice that the wind is coming up in the northwest. Soon there will be rain, and then the storm. The storms always come from that direction and the pattern is the same. First there is an eerie calm. The western sky darkens and then turns black. The storm begins to move closer, with flashes of lightning and the rolling of thunder in the distance. The wind picks up, and quickly there are whitecaps on the lake. That’s my cue to drop the canvas shades over the windows on the screen porch. Last summer there was a flash of lightning, a clap of thunder, and a major branch on a tall white pine near our cabin broke off and crashed to the ground with a tremendous thud.

Each time I watch a storm gathering, the words of a hymn come to mind:

*“O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made..”,**

And I often think about the storm described in Psalm 29.

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2296 **James Limburg**

Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary Saint Paul, Minn

**He is referencing “How great Thou art” Listen to this hymn based on Psalm 8.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By0iyTukDkQ> How Great Thou Art" is a Christian hymn based on a Swedish poem written by Carl Gustav Boberg (1859-1940) in Sweden in 1885. The melody is a Swedish folk song. It was translated into English by British missionary Stuart K. Hine, who also added two original verses of his own composition.

Ascribe to the LORD Glory A Psalm of David.

29 Ascribe to the **LORD**, O heavenly beings,^[a]

ascribe to the **LORD** glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the **LORD** the glory due his name;

worship the **LORD** in the splendor of holiness.^[b]

³ *The voice of the **LORD** is over the waters;*

the God of glory thunders,

*the **LORD**, over many waters.*

⁴ *The voice of the **LORD** is powerful;*

*the voice of the **LORD** is full of majesty.*

⁵ *The voice of the **LORD** breaks the cedars;*

*the **LORD** breaks the cedars of Lebanon.*

⁶ He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf,

and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ *The voice of the **LORD** flashes forth flames of fire.*

⁸ *The voice of the **LORD** shakes the wilderness;*

*the **LORD** shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.*

⁹ *The voice of the LORD* makes the deer give birth^[c]
and strips the forests bare,
and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

¹⁰ The **LORD** sits enthroned over the flood;
the **LORD** sits enthroned as king forever.

¹¹ May the **LORD** give strength to his people!
May the **LORD** bless^[d] his people with peace!

- a. [Psalm 29:1](#) Hebrew *sons of God, or sons of might*
- b. [Psalm 29:2](#) *Or in holy attire*
- c. [Psalm 29:9](#) *Revocalization yields makes the oaks to shake*
- d. [Psalm 29:11](#) *Or The Lord will give... The Lord will bless*

"The Bible speaks often of the effective power of the word of God.

The word of God is not *about* things, the word of God *does* things. We meet that word, that voice, in all its terrible power in Psalm 29.

The voice of the Lord is "heard" in this psalm in its effects on creation itself. The voice is "powerful" and "full of majesty" (verse 4), and that mighty voice is heard or seen in the thunderstorm that gives rise to "mighty waters," that breaks the largest trees, that "flashes forth" lightning (verse 7), stripping forests of their bark. We meet the voice in the earthquake that causes the greatest mountains to "skip" (verse 6) and the deserts to shake (verse 8). And we say, "Wow!" -- or "Glory!" (verse 9).

What else is there to say? We are overwhelmed -- as people always are when they see the power of earthquakes and eruptions, hurricanes and hail. Wow! First, this is more a "wow" of wonder and smallness than a wow of joy and celebration. All humans, believers and nonbelievers alike, will bow in awe at the power displayed in nature's fury. But Israel says, "Glory!" -- that is, glory to God in the highest. The voice of awe becomes a doxology of praise...

...the power *in* the poem is tempered by the careful structure *of* the poem. Psalm 29 is oxymoronic: it speaks of power untamed, yet it speaks of power within the taming structure of careful poetic parallelism. The psalm falls into three main parts:

Ascribe to the Lord... (call to praise) (verses 1-2)

The voice of the Lord... (the descriptive praise of this mighty "storm God") (verses 3-9)

The Lord sits enthroned... (reason for praise and concluding petitions) (verses 10-11)

Numbers matter in this structure. In parts one and three, we find four mentions each of the name Yahweh. In the middle section of the psalm, we have ten more namings of Yahweh, and we hear seven "voices" -- four Yahwehs, ten Yahwehs, four Yahwehs, and the middle ten caught up in a cacophony of seven voices. Four, ten, seven -- all "complete" numbers in Israel's symbolic use of numerology. The poem about uncontrolled power (which could be chaos) becomes an artistic creation that holds, describes, limits, and hems in the power. God creates order; so does God's poem...

That same power and purpose get taken up in the liturgy for the Baptism of Our Lord. We don't want Jesus' baptism or ours to be tamed. Water kills and cleanses, and it must do that in

order to give birth to new life. Something big is going on here, something like a fierce storm -- the voice of Psalm 29. But now, at Jesus' baptism, a new voice speaks. The voice of God in Psalm 29 says, "This is my cosmos." The voice of God at Jesus' baptism says, "This is my son."

As James Luther Mays (who makes this comparison) says, "The two go inseparably together. The Christology is not adequate unless its setting in cosmology is maintained. The Old Testament doxology is necessary to the gospel."² In other words, what does it look like when God shows up? It looks like a wild uncontrollable storm, and it looks like a Nazarene teacher wading into a river. For the fullness of biblical theology, you can't have one without the other."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1140 **Fred Gaiser**
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn



Epiphany, Ephesians 3:1-12, Baptism of Our Lord, Romans 6:1-11; RCL, Epiphany, the same reading; Baptism of the Lord, Acts 19:1-7 (1 Corinthians 6:12-20; RCL, the same reading)

"Romans 6:1a reads: "What therefore shall we say to this?" It is a formula that makes clear two things about our passage:

1) Romans 6:1 depends on what has been said in Romans 5. "What therefore shall we say to this?" is a polite way of asking, rhetorically, "So what?"

2) Romans 6:1 introduces a particular kind of literature. It follows a traditional debating formula called the diatribe. Paul imagines what someone hearing Romans 5 might think: "Shall we remain in sin that grace may abound?" Unless we understand that Paul is answering an imaginary interlocutor we have a hard time following what he is saying..." (continued after the reading)

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

6 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self^[a] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free^[b] from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- a. [Romans 6:6](#) Greek *man*
- b. [Romans 6:7](#) Greek *has been justified*

“What has been said in Romans 5 is that God's grace in Jesus Christ is an answer to human sin. However great Adam's transgression may have been (and however greatly we transgress as Adam's children), God's grace in Christ was greater--abundantly greater.

Now that he's said this, Paul begins to wonder about what his audience might think. "If sin is the occasion for grace, perhaps we should just keep on sinning so that God might go on showing us God's grace." Imagine the Prodigal Son come home from the far country and discovering not only forgiveness but feast. What if six months later he decides, "That worked so well, I'll just head for the far country again. The greater the sin, the greater the grace."

Paul's answer to this query is in two parts. Part one is as rhetorical as "what shall we say about this?" He says; "God forbid!" (Romans 6:2a) Or, "You've got to be kidding."

Part two is profoundly theological and can be summarized in a simple but not simple-minded formula: "Be who you are..."

And this new life for the Christians is evident in two ways:

1) Those who had been baptized into Christ will celebrate his conquest of death; they will live with him forever. (Romans 6:8)

2) Those who have been baptized into Christ will celebrate his conquest of sin; they will live true and holy lives right now. (Romans 6:6-7)

For Paul the idea of a sinful baptized person is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. "You are dead to sin," says Paul, "so stop acting as if you were capable of sin. Be who you are..."

When Christians are told to "remember our baptism" that does not mean so much remembering the time and the place or who were the sponsors or who performed the sacrament. It is a way of saying: Remember who you are; you have died to sin and now you live a new life in Jesus Christ. It is a way of saying: Be who you are...

It is a perennial and inescapable puzzle of the Christian faith that when we are truly servants we are truly free, so long as we are servants to God. When we are servants to sin or to sin's progeny--envy, greed, ambition--we are not free at all.

Remember this, says Paul, in baptism you put envy, greed, and ambition to death.

Christ lives: serve him."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=66 **David Bartlett**
Professor of New Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA



<https://www.sharefaith.com/image/jesus-baptism-church-bulletin-cover.html>

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1st Chapter”

Epiphany, Matthew 2:1-12, Baptism of Our Lord, Mark 1:4-11; RCL, the same reading for both (John 1:43-51; RCL, the same reading)

“On the first Sunday after Epiphany, we recall Jesus' baptism.

This day, coming soon after Christmas, provides rich opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' divine sonship (cf. Luke 1:32, 35), as well as the meaning of our own adoption as children of God through baptism into Christ.

The gospel text can be divided into three sections: the appearance of John in the wilderness (1:4-6); his preaching (1:7-8); and Jesus' baptism (1:9-11). Any one of these sections could become the basis for a sermon. However, the special character of this Sunday (and knowing that John's appearance and preaching were featured on the second Sunday in Advent) may encourage the preacher to focus on Jesus' baptism...” (continued after the reading)

⁴John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism of Jesus

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son,^[a] with you I am well pleased.”

- a. [Mark 1:11](#) Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

“...There is a certain irony in Mark's account of Jesus' baptism being chosen as the text for the first Sunday after Epiphany. In the church's tradition, Epiphany is the season when we recall the manifestation (epiphaneia) of Jesus to the world. Yet Mark's account of Jesus' baptism, like his gospel as a whole, has an air of secrecy. In Matthew, God's declaration about Jesus, "This is my son" (Matt 3:17), reads like a public announcement to John and the crowds gathered at the Jordan. In contrast, Mark portrays God's declaration of Jesus as though it were a private transaction between God and Jesus: "You are my son." Likewise, it is apparently Jesus alone who sees the heavens split open and the Spirit descend upon him. In the three other gospels, these events seem to be portrayed in more objective terms (Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34)...

This text is about new beginnings. Mark writes of Jesus' baptism under the rubric of the "beginning" (archē) of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:1). This word recalls Genesis 1:1-5, the Old Testament lesson for the day. "In the beginning," God's Spirit once hovered over the waters, while God spoke and called heaven and earth into being. So also at the baptism of Jesus, God's Spirit came over the waters and his voice declared Jesus to be his Son. That was the beginning of a whole new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5). Through Jesus' death and resurrection, which his baptism already foreshadows, the new creation is fulfilled. For us, we are baptized into Christ, and we all have the possibility of sharing in the new creation that Christ brings. Through baptism, we have all been reborn. In Christ, and in our daily return to our own baptisms, there is an inexhaustible source for the renewal and new beginnings of our lives (Titus 3:5)..."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=215 **Stephen Hultgren**
Lecturer in New Testament and Director of ALITE, Australian Lutheran College, North Adelaide, Australia



Agnus Day appears with the permission of <http://www.agnusday.org/>

THE MARK CHALLENGE – LECTIONARY YEAR B 2017-18

Challenge yourself to produce a handwritten copy of the book of Mark by Christ the King Sunday, November 25, 2018.

| | | | |
|----------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|
| December | Chapter 1 | 45 verses | completed ___?___ |
| January | Chapter 2, 3 | 63 verses | completed _____ |