



## Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany Year B January 28 2018

[Epiphany resource pack - see this site for additional resources for the season](#)

### INTRODUCTIONS

It's an interesting collection of readings this week that could lead us in a number of different directions. The wisdom & power of God's laws, commandments and teachings or the freedom that Christ offers would be two options. But a third, and I find more compelling, option would be to explore the authority and power of Jesus, especially in the light of Paul's comments on how we deal with what he calls "weaker" brothers and sisters. There is no question that the power and glory of God that is revealed in Christ is a very different thing from the way we usually understand those terms in our world today.

May our worship this week give us a new vision of the power and glory of our God.

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

### **Deuteronomy 18 : 15-20**

Moses understands that so long as people find God threatening, and fear to meet him, they will need someone as a mediator. He gives God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses himself, who will speak with divine authority.

### **The Psalm - Psalm 111**

A song in praise of God's deeds, God's care and provision for God's people, and celebrating how the fear of God brings wisdom.

### **1 Corinthians 8 : 1-13**

Paul continues to answer questions from the Greek Christians, who were troubled about whether they should eat food known to have been offered to an idol. The answer is, harm is only done if a fellow-Christian is offended by what he sees you doing. Our guiding principle must be sensitivity to the feelings of others.

### **Mark 1 : 21-28**

Mark begins Jesus's public ministry in a synagogue. When a man troubled in mind and body finds Jesus threatening, he is stilled with a word of divine authority. Everyone is amazed, and the reputation of Jesus for teaching and healing becomes widespread.

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=%0ADeuteronomy%2018:%2015-20%0Acw%20Psalm%20111%0A1%20Corinthians%208:%201-13%0AMark%201:%2021-28](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=%0ADeuteronomy%2018:%2015-20%0Acw%20Psalm%20111%0A1%20Corinthians%208:%201-13%0AMark%201:%2021-28)

## COLLECTS OF THE DAY

### Collect One

O God,  
who knowest us to be set  
in the midst of so many and great dangers,  
that by reason of the frailty of our nature  
we cannot always stand upright;  
Grant to us such strength and protection,  
as may support us in all dangers,  
and carry us through all temptations;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Collect Two

Creator God,  
who in the beginning  
commanded the light to shine out of darkness:  
We pray that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
may dispel the darkness of ignorance and unbelief,  
shine into the hearts of all your people,  
and reveal the knowledge of your glory  
in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Father, we pray for the 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 ministers of the gospel;  
**that they may faithfully proclaim your Word  
and administer your holy 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 favour in your sight.**

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

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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 community  
for the life and worship of this congregation  
and for those whose needs are known to us.....

Let us pray for ourselves.....

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Let us pray for those who delight in the law of the Lord, and for all people according to their needs.

We pray for the whole church. May patriarchs of the East and bishops of the West, pastors and ministers, deacons and all who do good works, find a place in the procession of the prophets who speak faithfully in God's name. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the hungry. May they be fed and live to give thanks to the one God and the one Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are appointed to make moral judgments. Grant them divine insight to make just and beneficial decisions. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the sick and all in any need. May your authority, which overwhelms the unclean spirits, also overcome all hurt. (We remember especially...). Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for Moses and the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and for Paul and the glorious company of the apostles. May their words and teaching guide us through life. In death receive us with them in to the heavenly kingdom. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### POST COMMUNION

Generous Lord,  
in word and eucharist we have proclaimed  
the mystery of your love.  
Help us so to live out our days  
that we may be signs of your wonders in the world;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

### PRAYERS

Perfect Light of revelation,  
as you shone in the life of Jesus,  
whose epiphany we celebrate,  
so shine in us and through us,

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that we may become beacons of truth and compassion,  
enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. Amen.

O God,  
you spoke your word  
and revealed your good news in Jesus, the Christ.  
Fill all creation with that word again,  
so that by proclaiming your joyful promises to all nations  
and singing of your glorious hope to all peoples,  
we may become one living body,  
your incarnate presence on the earth. Amen.

To God who welcomes all in love,  
let us pray for the good of the church  
and the concerns of those in need...  
God of every land and nation,  
you have created all people  
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.  
Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,  
and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,  
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,  
let us lift our hearts in faith  
to the one who hears all prayers  
and holds close all those in need...  
Holy God, you gather the whole universe  
into your radiant presence  
and continually reveal your Son as our Savior.  
Bring healing to all wounds,  
make whole all that is broken,  
speak truth to all illusion,  
and shed light in every darkness,  
that all creation will see your glory and know your Christ. Amen.

Holy and awesome God,  
your Son's authority is found in integrity and living truth,  
not the assertion of power over others.  
Open our imaginations to new dimensions of your love,  
and heal us of all that severs us from you and one another,  
that we may grow into the vision you unfold before us. Amen.

Holy and gracious God, we give thanks for all the blessings of this life.  
Help us to hear when you call, see where you lead;  
May we respond to your prophets when they appear.  
Loving God, fill those who suffer or struggle or live in fear with your peace.  
Comfort those who weep, the broken, the shattered, the lost with your hope.  
God of our desire, bless us, that we may be a blessing to all we meet. Amen

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things both in heaven and on earth:  
Mercifully hear the supplications of your people, and in our time grant us your peace;

through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### **Deuteronomy 18:15-20:**

- Moses declares to the people that God will raise up a prophet after his death - ostensibly he speaks of his successor, Joshua. He does this because the people feel that God speaking to them more directly, as at Horeb when God spoke out of the fire, is too frightening, too much to handle. Can you imagine thinking that God speaking directly to you is too much to handle? It might be intimidating, but most of us seem to wish God would speak to us more directly. (Maybe we'd change our minds after experiencing it!)
- So this new prophet, like Moses, will act as a go-between between the people and God. Has anyone ever served in this role for you? A pastor/priest can fill in this role, but if you *are* a clergy person, do you ever wish someone would stand between you and God? What experiences have you had?
- There is a condition, though, to the arrangement: The people must actually heed the words of the prophet. They can't make this arrangement and then decide they don't like the prophet - as they often threatened to do with Moses. When is it right to question authority, leadership? When is it not right?

### **Psalm 111:**

- The psalmist is praising God for faithfulness, for being a provider and covenant-keeper, for following through and being with the people. This psalm is all about praising and thanking God for all God has done.
- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Do you fear God? We're instructed over and over again in the scriptures not to be afraid. What does it mean, then, to fear God or to be God-fearing? I interpret it to mean we're to have an awe of God that is an awe we give *only* to God. Should/do we fear God anymore, or have we gotten too cozy? It's great to feel close to God, but have we lost our reverence in the process, the believe that God is actually above and beyond us in many respects? Where is a good line between fear/love/respect?

### **1 Corinthians 8:1-13:**

- This is a great passage from Paul, regarding a common obstacle in the communities of the early church: the debate over whether or not Christians should eat meat that had been sacrificed in pagan temples to pagan gods.
- Paul says, "Look - knowledge is all good and well. But what you need with God is love. If you love God, God knows you, and that's what's most important." He says, eloquently, "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Knowledge, like everything, is a gift from God. We can oppress others by withholding knowledge from them (women and people of color, for instance, have been denied education) but we can also give knowledge *too much power* when we treat it as the most important thing.
- Paul argues that "smarty-pants" Christians might know that eating sacrificed pagan meat is no big deal. He doesn't disagree with the reasoning - if the gods the meat was meant for aren't real, who cares about eating the meat? But Paul says there is a *much higher* concern: Christians who don't "get it" can be led astray by those who

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do - so what's the point of weakening the faith of another just to indulge in some meat?

- Paul concludes - why insist on doing something that will only cause another's faith to wobble, if that thing is not necessary. Personally, I think of drinking in this way. I don't think consuming alcohol is morally wrong. But it is a stumbling block for many. So, I choose to abstain, for the good of the whole.

### **Mark 1:21-28:**

- "as one having authority, not like the scribes" - Chris Haslam writes in his [comments](#) that the scribes would be knowledgeable, quoting scripture, but not have *their own* authority. Jesus, on the other hand, draws on scriptures, sure, but speaks for himself - his authority is from within.
- Haslam also says that healers/magicians of the day would have done rituals/magic to cleanse the man of the demon. Since Jesus can do this with only spoken words, the people see that indeed he does have a different kind of authority.
- Because of this deed, Jesus' "fame" begins to spread. Do you think this is what Jesus most wanted people to know about him? His casting out demons? Or would he have rather been famous for his teaching and message of love and grace for the least? I think Jesus was savvy - he got people talking and drew them so he could teach and touch them.

## **LECTIONARY NOTES 2**

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

A prophet like Moses – this became a dream for the people of Israel, and may be why they asked John the Baptist if he was "the prophet". As Epiphany gives us yet another perspective in Jesus, and the glory of God that he revealed, we discover that he is not just a prophet like Moses, but far more than that. If all the people wanted was a prophet like Moses, they were setting their sites too low. In the Gospel reading we are shown that this Jesus had an authority in his teaching that went beyond that of the religious leaders, and, by implication, even beyond Moses. Then, in his power to heal the demonised man, Jesus reveals his divine authority. Truly, as the Psalm sings, God has honoured God's promises, God has cared for God's people, and God has offered us one whose teaching gives wisdom and life. It can be tempting to take this uniqueness of Christ and use it for our own glory, as if we are somehow better than others because of our association with Christ. This, more than just the little issue of food, was Paul's concern in the letter to the Corinthians. On the one hand he affirms that Christ is supreme – that demons and idols are nothing, and so eating food sacrificed to idols means nothing and should not be a concern. But, on the other hand, he points out that we cannot use our knowledge of Christ as a cause for pride, or as a reason to be unconcerned for the struggles of others. The glory of God that is revealed in Christ is authoritative and powerful, yes, but it is the power to serve and the authority to liberate. This week, then, the Lectionary calls us to recognise, in awe and wonder, the amazing, liberating power of Christ, and to be empowered by Christ to serve and liberate others in whatever weakness, struggle or bondage they may find themselves.

**CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** The issue of power and glory is a massive one in our world – as it has always been. Power, by our understanding, is "power over" – the capacity to conquer, to coerce or to humiliate. Authority is the ability to command and direct others and not to be under the command of others. In service of this kind of power, dictators have brought suffering on their own people, corrupt politicians and business leaders have feathered their own nests, while ordinary people have to pay the consequences for their greed. In service of this power, wars are fought and nations deny their connectedness. In service of this power, men beat and abuse the women and children they claim to love. In service of this power religious organisations have lobbied governments, excluded those of different creeds or ideologies, and have pronounced judgement on the world. This quest for this kind of power has created systems like Nazism, Apartheid and all sorts of destructive nationalisms. Napoleon was right when he said that power corrupts. But, when Jesus reveals God's power and glory, it is an authority of a whole different order. It is not a "power over". Nor is it a manipulative "power under". Rather, Jesus calls people into God's liberating community – collaborative, shared power. This is why Paul encourages the believers not just to enjoy their own freedom, but to consider its effects on others, and to serve them. That's why Jesus' teaching was so captivating for people – he called them to share in God's Reign, and he revealed the freedom it offers. He did not use his authority to oppress, judge or control. In a world where a few powerful nations use their power to hinder climate talks (like at COP17), where super wealthy people resist carrying larger tax burdens for the sake of those who have less, and where strong economies dictate the terms of trade to smaller and weaker ones, we could do with a lesson in power from Jesus. And, as those who seek to follow Christ, we can work within our systems to collaborate with others, whoever they may be, to work for greater justice and equality, without trying to control things according to our own agendas, or fearing that we will somehow lose if we share our "power". It's easy to stand in judgement on those who see justice differently from us, but that simply polarises our world more. It may be that Christ's example calls us to stand with those who still believe in the idols of wealth and power, while gently revealing the freedom of Christ through our grace, love and servanthood.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** In every family, every neighbourhood and every church there are inevitable power struggles. We hold our convictions dearly, and we want others to see things as we do and to honour our view. In addition, we grow fearful that the views and needs and power of others may rob us of things we hold dear. Somehow we have come to believe that sharing power diminishes it, when, in fact, it does the opposite. Even in what we have come to call "spiritual warfare" – our "fight" against evil – we have framed the scene in terms of "power over" – Jesus proving "stronger" than demons. Yet, when we put Jesus' teaching, and this story of healing, in the context of Jesus' life, we discover that for Jesus fighting evil required a cross, not a sword, and drove him to service and sacrifice, not violence or conquest. What this means is that we are called, firstly, to embrace and experience Jesus' liberation for ourselves – the release of those things that would bind us, which almost always stem from our fear or self-interest – and then to engage with others as Christ did, sharing power, serving and liberating. This may mean learning, as parents, to collaborate with our children on their own values and ways of discipline. It may mean, as spouses, learning the art of collaboration in everything from finances to sex. It may mean as leaders of churches or groups learning to free others to find their own leadership, and serving them in the process, without fearing the loss of our own power or prestige. It may mean, as Paul teaches, releasing our own "rights" and "freedoms" in order to ensure that we do not cause others to stumble. It may mean working alongside those we may disagree with if it will help to bring justice or grace to people in our community. If we long for God's glory and authority to be seen in us, it certainly won't happen if we constantly strive for

things to be done "our" way or if we constantly fight for control. Rather, when we embody Christ's liberating grace, that is when the glory and authority of Jesus is most clearly seen in us.

## **ONLINE SERMON SOURCES**

**Sermons that Work - "Building up, not puffing up the church,"** Katerina K. Whitley, Episcopal Digital Network

The gospel, on this fourth Sunday in the season of Epiphany, plunges us into the acts and words of one who speaks with authority. The light of Epiphany shines today on the character of the one sent from God. The evangelist Mark zeroes in on this divine quality at the very beginning of his gospel. He says of those listening to Jesus in the Capernaum synagogue: "They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2015/01/12/4-epiphany-b-2015/>

**Day 1 - "Sermon for the 4th Sunday after Epiphany,"** by the Rt. Rev. William Burrill, retired Episcopal Bishop of Rochester

The word Epiphany itself means to be touched, to be made manifest. It comes from the same word as manual, manifestation, manual, to be touched by the hand. In our common language we often talk about being touched, to be deeply touched. We will refer to a person who's having mental or emotional problems as being out of touch. Epiphany season is when we reflect upon how we have been touched by the presence of God through the manifestation in Jesus Christ.

[http://day1.org/697-sermon\\_for\\_the\\_4th\\_sunday\\_after\\_epiphany](http://day1.org/697-sermon_for_the_4th_sunday_after_epiphany)

**America - What is this? A new teaching with authority!**-John R Donahue gives a concise and informed overview of the gospel reading from Mark. It is good exegesis. And then he moves on to deal with the Old Testament lesson which as he comments, on virtually every Sunday, are determined by the Gospel of that day. Unfortunately the Roman calendar's OT lesson is on Jonah! He concludes: These readings offer a kaleidoscope of themes: the graphic realism of Mark's Jesus; the sudden coming of God into ordinary human life; the challenge for the church to be prophetic, and a "community of disciples" (Pope John Paul II); the confrontation of God's reign with the anti-reign of evil. Yet, viewed through the prism of Jonah, the deeper message may be that conversion, community and confrontation with evil, are ultimately God's doing—achieved in startling ways.

[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=510](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=510)

**Day 1 - Deals with the authority of Jesus.** "... the Old Testament reading for today is from Deuteronomy and in that lesson it says the Lord will raise up prophets. And as we look at the Old Testament, the prophets were people almost exclusively without office, not people of high rank, not high priests, not judges. They were farmers, they were vinedressers, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon them and they were able to speak with authority, and the people listened.

"And in today's Gospel, Jesus has come to the synagogue in Capernaum and he has begun to teach the people. What amazes the people is that he teaches them as one who has authority and they realize he does not hold any office. He's not a member of the Sanhedrin. He's not a judge or a priest. And, yet, he speaks as one who knows the truth...



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“... As people of faith, for two thousand years we have come to understand that this authority in the person Jesus is uniquely powerful because it is related to God.”

This is a long sermon, but there is much in it to stimulate thought.

<http://day1.org/697-sermon-for-the-4th-sunday-after-epiphany>

### CHILDREN

**Worshiping with Children, Epiphany 4B**, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/year-b-4th-sunday-after-epiphany-4th.html>

**Faith Formation Journeys, Epiphany 4B, childrens sermon**

<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/epiphany-4-year-b-1-corinthians-81-13.html>

### HYMN SUGGESTIONS

#### 1st Reading Deuteronomy 18: 15–20

319\* Father, of heaven, whose love profound

92\* How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

535\* Judge eternal, throned in splendour

#### Psalm 111

84\* Alleluia! raise the anthem

352\* Give thanks with a grateful heart

574 I give you all the honour

130\* Jesus came, the heavens adoring

529\* Thy hand, O God, has guided

373\* To God be the glory! Great things he has done!

#### 2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 8: 1–13

518\* Bind us together, Lord

103\* O Christ the same, through all our story's pages

529\* Thy hand, O God, has guided

#### The Gospel Mark 1: 21–28

211\* Immortal love for ever full

99\* Jesus, the name high over all

513 O Christ, the healer, we have come

104\* O for a thousand tongues to sing

112\* There is a Redeemer

514\* We cannot measure how you heal

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[Crown Him With Many Crowns](#)

[Blessed Jesus At Thy Word](#)

[I Sing The Almighty Power Of God](#)

[Jesus, Lord, We Look To Thee](#)

[All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name](#)

[The Lord Reigns](#)

[How Long?](#)

[God Of Justice](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Mighty To Save](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Who Is This? \(Miracles\)](#)

**Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to [churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com) with the message Passwords in the title**