



# The First Sunday after the Epiphany

**Year B**

**January 11, 2015**

## INTRODUCTIONS

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

**Genesis 1:1-5**: On the first day of creation the earth is formless and God's Spirit hovers over the waters. Then God speaks and begins to create the universe.

**Psalms 29**: A psalm of praise for God's voice which is strong and majestic and which thunders over mighty waters, where God is enthroned.

**Acts 19:1-7**: Paul finds a group of believers in Ephesus who have been baptised with John's baptism, but not with that of Christ. He explains that John's points to the One who came after him, and they are baptised in the name of Jesus.

**Mark 1:4-11**: John the Baptist baptises people in the Jordan River, calling them to repent. He preaches that One is coming after him who will baptise in the Holy Spirit.

[Click here to view the readings](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%201:1-5%20Psalms%2029%20Acts%2019:1-7%20Mark%201:4-11)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Genesis%201:1-5%20Psalms%2029%20Acts%2019:1-7%20Mark%201:4-11](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%201:1-5%20Psalms%2029%20Acts%2019:1-7%20Mark%201:4-11)

## COLLECTS OF THE DAY

### Collect One

O Lord,  
we beseech thee mercifully to receive  
the prayers of thy people which call upon thee;  
and grant that they may both perceive and know  
what things they ought to do,  
and also may have grace and power  
faithfully to fulfil the same;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Collect Two

Eternal Father,  
who at the baptism of Jesus  
revealed him to be your Son,  
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:  
Grant to us, who are born of water and the Spirit,  
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Father in heaven, we thank you for the witness of countless men and women  
who have put their trust in you and found unfailing power and love.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that your Spirit may give us grace when burdened with difficulties, to  
trust in your strength;  
When overwhelmed with sorrow, to rest in your love;  
When emptied of feeling and purpose, to know you are present;  
After the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who through the utmost  
suffering of body, agony of mind and darkness of soul, still trusted in you.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

As we renew our baptism vows, a prayer for Christian living:  
Weave us, O Christ, into your people, and bless our belonging.  
Hold us, O Christ, in your love, and bless our pledging.  
Stay with us, O Christ, in darkness and doubt, and bless our trusting.  
Fill us, O Christ, with your Holy Spirit, and bless our lives serving you.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

As young people return and prepare to return to a new education term, a  
prayer for their future:  
We offer this prayer, Father, for our schools and colleges.  
That those who teach in them may be endowed with the love and  
understanding we see revealed in the life and example of Jesus Christ;  
That children may be guided in the way that leads to the abundant life which  
Jesus came to bring us all;  
That students may accept with gratitude and humility your gifts of mind and  
the opportunity to use them;

That the Spirit of truth may use their studies to enlarge their understanding of your purpose for humankind, made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

In a world increasingly obsessed with material wealth, Lord, teach us to value our possessions in the right way. Help us never to think more of them than of people.

Make us ready to use them freely for the good of others and to share them generously without grudging. Thank you for the beautiful things that we enjoy possessing. May our enjoyment be wholesome and right and may we hold lightly to all we own.

For the sake of Jesus Christ, who became poor that we might be eternally rich.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2**

*Presider or deacon*

As we celebrate the baptism of Christ, let us offer prayers to God who calls us to a baptism of repentance.

*Deacon or other leader*

By the baptism of the Son of God in the river Jordan.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, for the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For *NN* our catechumen(s) and for their families and sponsors.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all who seek Christ, and for the conversion of the whole human race.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For mercy, peace, and justice throughout the world

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, the hungry and the oppressed, and those in prison.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the dying and the dead.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife, and need.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Remembering the Blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

God, who breathed across the waters of creation, accept the prayers we offer on this joyful feast, and lead us by your Spirit from darkness into light; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

## **POST COMMUNION**

Refreshed by these holy gifts, Lord God,  
we seek your mercy:  
that by listening faithfully to your only Son,  
and being obedient to the prompting of the Spirit,  
we may be your children in name and in truth;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **PRAYERS**

God of grace and glory,  
you call us with your voice of flame  
to be your people, faithful and courageous.  
As your beloved Son  
embraced his mission in the waters of baptism,  
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit  
to join in his transforming work.  
We ask this in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Sisters and brothers,  
our baptismal vows call us to compassion and mercy  
on behalf of those in need.  
We offer our prayers for the church and the world. Amen.

Lord God,  
you revealed your Son in the waters of the Jordan

and anointed him with the power of the Holy Spirit  
to proclaim good news to all people.  
Sanctify us by the same Spirit,  
that we may proclaim the healing power of the gospel  
by acts of love in your name. Amen.

Holy God,  
creator of light and herald of goodness,  
at the waters of his baptism  
you proclaimed Jesus your beloved Son.  
With the baptized of every time and generation,  
may we say yes to your call to repentance  
and be led to the life of abundance we experience  
in your kinship and your love. Amen.

Creator God, we praise and worship you for your infinite power and love. We thank you that you have washed us clean and that you continue to inspire and refresh us. Please bring to our minds now those things that go against your Word and your desires for us. We sincerely pray that you forgive us, free us from these things, give us strength and wisdom, and lead us to be more like Christ. Amen.

Father in heaven, at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ, faithful in their calling to be your children and inheritors with him of everlasting life; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

God of love whose compassion never fails; we bring before you the griefs and perils of all of the people and nations, the pains of the sick and injured, the sighings of prisoners and captives, the sorrows of the bereaved, the necessities of the homeless, the helplessness of the weak, the despair of the weary, the failing powers of the aged. Comfort and relieve them, O merciful Father, according to their needs and your great mercy; for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen. *Common Worship shorter form*

God our Redeemer, through Jesus Christ you have assured your children of eternal life and in Baptism have made us one in him. Deliver us from the

death of sin and raise us to new life in Christ; for he is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Methodist Worship*

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

The first Sunday after the Epiphany is always rich with symbolism and possibilities. This year the themes of water, creation and, of course, God's Spirit all come together. In the creation account, we see God creating through the word and the Spirit who hovers over the waters. In the Psalm God is celebrated as awesome and mighty, enthroned over the waters with a thunderous voice. In Ephesians, the act of baptism in Christ's name is seen to be a saving and empowering act, which brings the Ephesian believers into a new relationship with Christ beyond what they had experience through John's baptism. Finally, in a wonderfully brief but powerful narrative, Mark describes Jesus being baptised, and receiving both God's Spirit and God's affirmation. There is so much here that it could easily become confusing to preach on the readings this week – there is the Trinitarian nature of both Christ's baptism, and the creation account. There is the difference between John's baptism and that of Jesus. It may be best, though, to allow the season of Epiphany to dictate the theme, in which case, God's glory as revealed through Christ's baptism would be a good focal point. What is significant here, is that God's glory is primarily seen not in grand shows of supernatural miracle-working, or displays of grandeur and blinding light. Rather, in Mark's Gospel, it seems, only Jesus sees the dove and hears the voice. For all others, God's glory is revealed in a very human moment, where the One to whom John has been pointing stands with all humanity and receives the same baptism we do. In this way God's glory is seen in Christ's humanity, and Christ's solidarity with the human race which is so loved by God. But, as the readings indicate, this coming of Christ is a creative act – an empowerment of Christ for his saving mission, but also a moment in which humanity is redefined, both because God has become human, but also because human beings are invited to experience God's presence and to become one with God – as described in the experience of the Ephesians.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** If there is anything our world needs, it's to recognise God's solidarity with us, to discern God's glory in humanity – especially the poorest and most vulnerable – and to know the empowerment of God's creative Spirit to address our challenges. At the start of a new year, the sense of possibility is a gift, but we face an uncertain year with many

difficulties still requiring resolution. Despair and a sense of abandonment by God can easily derail our attempts to bring God's grace and justice into people's lives. We can take heart, however, from the knowledge of God's presence with us in Christ, and from the inspiration, strength and creativity that we receive from God's Spirit. With this in mind, the celebration of Christ's baptism gives us an opportunity to renew our commitment to serve our world with hope, to call our leaders to justice and to increasing our efforts to serve and uplift the poor, the marginalised and the voiceless. In Christ's solidarity with humanity, we find an example which calls us to solidarity with the suffering. The challenge is for us to be involved practically as well as financially or philosophically, in the work for justice, peace and equity. Perhaps this week is a good time to make a new commitment to some organisation or movement which is bringing positive change, and to commit to participate in advocacy work of some kind. But, perhaps it is also a time to build (or increase) specific actions into the lives of our communities that can get us involved in practical and creative ways with bringing change. One thing is sure, though. This week starts the year with a clear message that we cannot ignore justice issues in our following of Christ. We cannot avoid God's gracious and compassionate concern for the least, and we cannot avoid the call to be participants in God's creative, saving work in our world.

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Too many church communities are simply meeting places for individuals who have little connection with each other. Baptism has become, for many, an individual experience with little connection to community or shared life. However, as Jesus demonstrates, baptism begins with Christ's willingness to step into relationship and solidarity with us, and calls us into creative community with one another. The empowerment of God's Spirit, then, is not just for the individual, but for the community, and for us to be creative in serving one another, and serving our neighbours. Baptism is always a mark of our belonging in God's domain, and an empowerment for bringing God's saving, restorative work into the lives of others. So, even as we celebrate Christ's baptism, and the glory of God that is revealed through it, this week, may we also seek to celebrate one another, and learn to see God's glory in each other, even as we stand together to serve those around us. Commitment to one another, and commitment to the wider community in which we, as church, operate are the marks of a Christ-following church, and are the calls which the Lectionary offers us this week.

## LECTIONARY NOTES 2

### ***Genesis 1:1-5:***

"In the beginning," so starts the word of God. What a great beginning. I believe that science and faith can go hand in hand. I believe that



evolution doesn't have to contradict our believe in God as creator. This said, I can't ask for a better description of creation than the poetic opening of Genesis.

Also compare Genesis 1 with John1 - John clearly tries to align himself with this style of writing, showing Christ's presence even at creation. "wind from God swept over the face of the waters" - how would you draw this - visually represent it?

Note that here on the first day, and throughout creation, God declares things as "good." Creation is *good*.

### ***Psalm 29:***

"The Voice of the Lord" - I guess I've never noticed this psalm before, which speaks primarily of God's voice.

It is also visualizing God creating or in relation to a strong and powerful thunderstorm, which may be based on a psalm to the Caananite god, Baal (see Chris Haslam's [comments](#) on this) God over the waters, God's glory thundering, breaking the cedars, flashes forth flames of fire, "the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness." What can we do with these images? I am currently leading a Bible-study, [Companions in Christ](#), in my church. This week's lesson is on using our imagination to read the scriptures. Certainly this psalmist used imagination to create this imagery, to make God's voice come alive.

What imagery would you use to describe/envision God's voice in your life? I like the process theology metaphor of God's *lure*, God slowly luring me with God's voice until slowly, step by step, I followed.

### ***Acts 19:1-7:***

This passage represents a fulfilling of John the Baptist's words in our text from Mark today. John the Baptist says that he baptizes with water, but the coming baptism will be of the Holy Spirit. Paul happens upon folks who have been baptized by John, and he urges them to take this "Holy Spirit" baptism.

Paul and Mark both indicate that John's baptism is a baptism of repentance/confession/forgiveness. So how would you characterize the baptism of the Holy Spirit? As a baptism of grace? Do you think today



that different denominations characterize the meaning of baptism differently like this? Some viewing it as a baptism of repentance, others as a baptism of grace? What do you think?

"spoke in tongues and prophesied" - what did they say? I always want more details, more information, more specifics.

### **Mark 1:4-11:**

John sees himself as facilitating Jesus' ministry - preparing people for it. His role is so important, isn't it? Do you know of people who play this kind of supporting role in ministry today?

Make sure you compare Mark's recording of this scene (remember Mark is the earliest gospel written) with the accounts in the other gospels. In Mark, God speaks directly to Jesus: *You* are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased. Other accounts have God saying *This* is my Son. I prefer Mark's recording - God speaking directly to God's child.

We might all wish for the heavens to part and for a dove to descend and for God to declare in front of all that we are pleasing and beloved in God's sight, but it doesn't usually work quite that way for us. How does it work for us? How can we know God loves us? What are the markers and milestones in our lives and ministries? How can we play John to someone, preparing them, providing a space for them to begin their calling?

*By Beth Quick*

## **ONLINE SERMON SOURCES**

### **Sermons that work - The Episcopal Church - The Baptism of Our Lord**

Scroll down to - The Baptism of Our Lord (B)

*"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."*

It is the narrative simplicity of this verse from the first chapter of Mark that stuns at first reading. John the Baptizer had been working hard on the banks of the river, calling people to repentance and proclaiming that someone else was coming to complete his own ministry. According to the evangelist Mark, John had made it clear that The One who was coming after him was more powerful than he; John had shown his own humility by using an example of a

servant's act: bending down and untying an honored person's sandals. "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandal," he said of the one who was to come.

And.... There is a second sermon for The Baptism of Our Lord, year B - scroll down further... which is based on today's RCL lessons given above...

Today we celebrate a rite of passage: the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, the river that held so much significance for generations of ancestors before him. Jesus was baptized by his cousin, John. It was a baptism of repentance, an act of humility and the receiving of a name – the death to the old and the creation of a new identity. The readings today help us connect and focus on baptisms, including our own baptisms.

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/?s=Baptism+of+our+Lord>

## CHILDREN

### Talks2children

There are three talks for Epiphany here -

<http://talks2children.wordpress.com/category/epiphany/>

### Worshipping with Children

Ideas for each Bible reading and a talk on the Epiphany custom of chalking the door.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/year-epiphany-sunday-january-2-or.html>

### Anna's Hosannas - Pointing Out the Christ - Mark 1: 4-11

First Thoughts: I want to focus a bit on John the Baptist – who's such an interesting character we can bet the kids will like him! Everyone was looking for the Christ, but it was this wild man in the wilderness – dressed in animal skins and eating locusts (both of which put him squarely outside appropriate religious decorum) – who spotted him. How quick are we to ignore or silence the "weirdoes" in our congregation? Can you recall a time when you received wisdom or enlightenment from someone who surprised you? Not only can God use such folks, God seems to delight in it. (As 1 Samuel 16 reminds us, we look on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart!) *To access full lesson, please contact [Sermon Suite!](#)*

<http://annashosannas.net/Children%5C%27s-Lessons-Epiphany-B.php>

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

*Hymn Suggestions:*

[O Love How Deep](#)

[All Creatures Of Our God And King](#)

[Breathe On Me Breath Of God](#)

[Baptized In Water](#)

[On Jordan's Bank The Baptist's Cry](#)

[Deep Calls To Deep](#)

[Here I Am To Worship](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

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

[We Give Glory](#)

[All Who Are Thirsty](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

**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**