

Text Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42  
Theme Come and see.  
Subject Unwrapping our gift from God at Christmas  
Occasion Epiphany 2 (MLK) – January 15, 2023 – New Song Episcopal – Coralville, Iowa

The worship folder doesn't tell of a sermon now but I've gotten one for you.

Primarily we are gathered here on the second Sunday after The Epiphany of Our Lord  
However, tomorrow is a national holiday.

A day to recognize the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, jr.  
Coretta Scott King said,

*“The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others.”*

So it is that MLK Day is the only federal holiday also designated by Congress as a National Day of Service – a “DAY ON, NOT A DAY OFF.”

[There will be announcements with information about MLK events at the end of worship]

Preaching on a weekend when a nation remembers the work of a pastor/preacher is a privilege – the Word of God is our foundation

Martin would be more than disappointed if I were to talk about him and not the Word of God.

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Adapting St. Paul's words

*To the church of God that is New Song, to you who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours<sup>1</sup>*

Please own these verses from Paul as spoken to you

*I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus<sup>2</sup>*

During my retirement I've grown more grateful for Paul's writings

This Jewish man who so enthusiastically came to believe in Jesus,

He wrote to the congregations in Rome explaining his mission:

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.<sup>3</sup>**

He wanted the whole world to know.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1:4b

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:16

These days of Epiphany are a means in the Church calendar to begin unwrapping our gift

The Gospel of John is my text for this morning but hear first the prophet sings<sup>4</sup> out:

**Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!**

And deeper into this song

**I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”**

There is fulfillment before us in the Gospel reading from John

John the baptizer, has the people’s attention.

Suddenly he announces, **“Here is the Lamb of God”**<sup>5</sup>

The Gospel of John is such fine writing

Already the scene of today’s reading has been set in very first verse of John

**In the beginning was the Word**<sup>6</sup>

Then we’re given an epiphany hint:

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**<sup>7</sup>

Then comes the proclamation of God’s incarnation

**The Word became flesh and lived among us**<sup>8</sup>

The Gospel of John is lush with layers of meaning

For example, in today’s reading Jesus is given 4 names:

- In the first verse (vs.29) & vs 36 John the baptizer calls Jesus **the Lamb of God**
- At the end of verse 34 the baptizer calls him **the Son of God**
- At the end of verse 38, 2 unnamed disciples call him **Rabbi**
- In verse 41, Andrew tells his brother Peter he’d found **the Messiah**

This would make for a worthy 4-part sermon series            sometime

Yet, more important within the text: Jesus speaks

The 2 guys heard the Baptizer name Jesus the Lamb of God

So, they followed Jesus

Jesus turns and says, **“What are you looking for?”**<sup>9</sup>

This isn’t just for these 2 guys

This is for us and every reader

Let Jesus ask you, *what are you looking for?*

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 49:1a and 6b

<sup>5</sup> John 1:29b

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 1:1

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 1:5

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 1:14

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 1:38b

The 2 call him Rabbi and ask, “**Where are you staying?**”<sup>10</sup>

As if to say, “*Are you for real?*”

Yes, Jesus replies, **Come and see**<sup>11</sup>

Jesus’s invitation to these 2 guys is also for us: Come and See

John’s inviting readers to come along

This morning I’ll take you on a brief survey of where John takes us

So Come and See: turn the page

Go to a wedding in Cana, not far away (ch. 2)

There’s a problem      They don’t have what’s needed to celebrate

They’ve run out of wine

Jesus turns 120 gallons of water into 120 gallons of wine

How you doing – have everything you need in life to celebrate?

Turn the page (ch. 3) – Come and See

It’s dark; there’s been a lot of talk about Jesus’ teaching and his works

One of the leading Jews finds Jesus at night

Be born again – remember the prophecy for a Messiah – the fulfillment is here

Remember the words: **God so loved the world that he gave his only son ...**

Come to Jesus in your darkness (your questions, uncertainties) – receive him anew

Come and See: Turn the page (ch. 4)

There at an ancient well where Jesus goes midday and asks a woman for water

Jesus doesn’t have a bucket; her life is a mess

She’s been passed from one man to another like a piece of meat

He welcomes and renews her, and she goes to the city saying, **Come and See**

Take down your mask; no need to hide your brokenness; Jesus knows you

Receive him like living water and discover an abundant life

Turn the page (ch. 6) – Come and See

What to do when 5000 people show up and at supper time

A lad offers his 2 fish and 5 loaves      AND      everybody has plenty to eat

The disciples pick up 12 baskets of left overs

This was not a nuclear fission miracle!      John is telling a miracle of the heart

People weren’t traveling with laundry baskets – they had groceries

By the lad’s example, people shared

Come and see Jesus bring people together – each of us bringing what we have

Come and See: Turn the page (ch. 8)

A woman who had endured sexual assault / being labeled / about to be stoned

Jesus intervenes; you know what he said:

**“You who have no sin, cast the first stone.”**<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 1:38d

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 1:39a

Let her be you – remembering our suffering, being labeled, life threatening voices  
 Trust in the presence of Jesus revealed in Christian communities  
 Be truthful: let that crowd be you too – we’re guilty in our critique of others  
 Time to bind our tongues and minds to live the hospitality and rescue of Jesus

Before we turn the page

It is here that Jesus announces **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”**<sup>13</sup>

The invitation continues – follow Jesus

One more time: Turn the page (ch. 9)

Come and See when a blind man is healed – the conversation is very long

How did it happen? When did it happen? Who’s at fault? How was healed?

The truth is vigorous beyond speculation

Jesus heals blindness and shows a new way of life - Come and See

Some pages later, Jesus announces **“I am the way, the truth and the life”**<sup>14</sup>

Pause (turning to MLK)

James Baldwin has observed and helps us for this weekend of service and kindness,

*“If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don’t see.”*

Last week the *New York Times* included an opinion piece by Jamelle Bouie. He wrote,

“Martin’s best-known speech is *The Dream Speech* at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963; his Christmas sermon in 1967 at Ebenezer Baptist Church has a universal character for us today”

Jamelle then included this quote, *“This Christmas season finds us a rather bewildered human race. We have neither peace within nor peace without. Everywhere paralyzing fears harrow people by day and haunt them by night. Our world is sick with war; everywhere we see its ominous possibilities.*

*“If we don’t have good will toward (people) in this world, we will destroy ourselves by misuse of our own instruments and our own power.”*

Jamelle observed, “Martin wanted his listeners to experiment with nonviolence beyond the struggle for racial justice in the United States. But to do that, he knew our moral and ethical obligations had to be ecumenical rather than regional or parochial.

Martin King concluded, *“No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone, and as long as we try, the more we are going to have war in this world. We must either learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we are all going to perish together as fools.”*

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 8:7b

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 8:12

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 14:6

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 1:5