

Lay Preachers' Bulletin – January 2022

January's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Kyle Norman, Incumbent of Holy Cross, Calgary.

January 2 – The Epiphany of the Lord

Matthew 2:1-12. (Propers BAS page 279)

- “Magi from the east came to Jerusalem.” Notice that is a band of foreign sages (and not the faithful in Jerusalem!) that recognise the sign of the star and offer worship to the newborn king. The feast of Epiphany centers around the manifestation of Christ to the nations. Jesus is not simply the Jewish messiah, but he is Lord of all people -from every tribe, nation, and language. How does God’s love for all people (regardless of classification) call us to embody a same loving attitude?
- Notice the places where you can connect Jesus’ birth with his death. In both places, Jesus is called “King of the Jews.” Both places contain a “disturbance” from the political and religious rulers. Furthermore, frankincense and myrrh were used during ceremonial offerings (Exodus 30:9) and was often used in burials. Could a sermon be built upon the revelation of the cross at the point of Christ’s birth?
- “When Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.” Instead of seeing ourselves as the Magi, are we the religious of the day? Where does the kingship of Jesus disturb us? What does it mean for us to believe that Jesus is our King?
- “They bowed down and worship him.” This passage revolves around a point of worship. What is worship? How is worship expressed in your church? Describe not only *what* takes place, but *why* it takes place as well.

January 09 – The Baptism of the Lord

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22. (Propers BAS page 348)

- “...all were wondering in their hearts if John might be the Christ.” The Jews were in constant anticipation of the day of the Lord. Because of John’s popularity, along with his prophetic dress and style – people naturally wondered if he was the one long-awaited for.
- “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”. The word “*baptize*” literally means “to be immersed in. John was “immersing” people into the river Jordan. He promises that the Messiah will “immerse” people in the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to live our lives immersed in the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit influence our Christian lives today?
- “Fire/ unquestionable fire.” This reading contains the image of winnowing/purification. This can be an uncomfortable process – but one which is ultimately necessary. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit “burns away” all that obstructs our connection with God. How does the Spirit “clear out” our sins – so that we can be “brought into his barn.”
- “You are my beloved Son.” This is a declaration of Christ’s divine and messianic status. This alludes to several old Testament passages, namely Psalm 22:2, Isaiah 42:1, and Psalm 2:7. There may also be a link to Genesis 22:2 where Isaac is announced as Abrahams “son, your only son, whom you love.” Jesus is here shown as the promised son of God.
- NOTE: Be careful of ADOPTIONISM. This is a 2nd Century heresy that suggested Jesus was chosen to be the Messiah at his baptism. Jesus’ baptism doesn’t *make* Jesus the Messiah, it declares him to be divine Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah.

January 16 – Epiphany 2

John 2:1-11. (Propers BAS page 349)

- The first thing we must recognize is that scripture contains no evidence that the wine served at the wedding was unfermented. Jesus changes water into wine, not grape-juice.
- Wine was an important image of a wedding to describe the inauguration of God's redemptive Kingdom (see Hosea 2:18-23; Amos 9:13; Revelation 19:6-9)
- "Choice Wine" Not only is God's redemptive kingdom expressed as a wedding, God's age of redemption also involves 'choice wine' (Isaiah 5:1-4).
 - Given these two things, the miracle takes a deeper nuance: The miracle announces the beginning of God's redemptive Kingdom!
- "Six stone water jars"; These jars would have been used to wash the hand (and possibly feet) of the guests.
- "everyone brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink." The implication is that the choice wine should not be "wasted" on those who do not recognize it or appreciate it. In contrast, Jesus is lavish in his blessings.
- Water to wine: Throughout the gospels, Jesus takes ordinary things and transforms them into instruments of blessing. Water is turned into wine. Wine is turned into blood. What does it mean for our lives to be transformed into an instrument of blessing?

January 23 – Epiphany 3

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a. (Propers BAS page 350)

- This passage gives a good opportunity to address the importance of Christian community. When handled with care and compassion, one may address congregational dynamics.
- “The body”: When we call the church “the body of Christ”, we are saying that Jesus is seen in the way we act together in faith. We are baptized by the Spirit into “one body” – that is the body of Christ.
 - See verse 27
- “Many parts”: Where have you seen the blessings of God occur in the church – as people act together and/or support one another. How do we recognize the importance of each other’s gifts? A sermon can explore the notion of blessing others, and allowing others to bless us!
 - In this way, the sermon can also speak about suffering with the parts of the community that suffer, and rejoicing with the parts that rejoice. How do we embody this in our churches?
- “The eye cannot say to the hand I don’t need you” – are there parts of the congregation that are being ignored? Are there people that we tend to reject? Notice the challenge in this passage. Being a body means that we value those who are different than us. This naturally pushes us to a beyond our comfort-zones. We are not a community of the like-minded, or a community of ease. Jesus calls us dare to see his presence in the face of others.
- Are some apostles, prophets, teachers....” A sermon can also reflect on the various ministries to occur within the community of faith. Each has a unique gift, a way to serve one another. A sermon can encourage the congregation to explore their own personal calling and ministry.

January 30 – Epiphany 4

1 Corinthians 13:1-13. (Propers BAS page 352)

- When tackling this passage, it is important to avoid sentimentality! This is not about romanticism, or hallmark-style pleasantries. This chapter on love is a radical look at the foundation of Christian life and ministry.
- The word for Love, in this passage, is *agape* – which means divine, self-sacrificial love. This is the love expressed in Jesus. This means that what Paul writes below is about how we express the love of Jesus in our lives.
- Notice that the description Paul uses from verses 4-78 are all relational. This is about how we live with others. Love focuses on the other.
 - Explore some practical ways that we may be called to express patience, or kindness. How do we avoid rudeness or self-seeking?
- Love is an enduring quality, which never fails, only as it is rooted in our relationship with Christ. The source of Christian love must be a desire for Jesus to be revealed.
- Faith, Hope, Love: We throw these terms around often – but what do they really mean?
 - FAITH: Greek: *pistis*; An active state of confidence, reliance, and trust.
 - HOPE: Greek: *elpis*; A state of optimistic expectancy. The belief something will be accomplished, revealed, or made known.
 - LOVE: Greek; *agape*; Sacrificial love. Love which is rooted in the presence and activity of God. Holy love.