

## **Epiphany 2 / January 19, 2020**

### **1 Corinthians 1:7-8**

**“so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Epiphany is a season of revealing, as through His word Jesus is revealed as the Saviour; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. When people looked at Jesus they saw a man and nothing more. Although He is the eternal Word of God clothed in human flesh, rays of light didn't seep out from His face. There was no halo hovering over His head to mark Him out as the Son of God. Moses met with God in the Tent of Meeting, where the bible says the Lord spoke with him as man speaks with his friend. When Moses departed from Tent of Meeting the glory of the Lord radiated from his face. In fact, the brilliance of the reflected glory was so great that Moses had to put a veil over his face. Moses didn't need ID. People knew it was Moses just by his appearance. They knew when he was coming, where he had been and with whom he had been speaking. There was no greater servant in the Lord's house than Moses. The author of Hebrews says that while Moses was the greatest servant in the Lord's house, Jesus is greater, because He is God's Son. However, despite His surpassing greatness, Jesus didn't look like God's eternal Son. His face didn't radiate divine glory. Jesus needed to be identified as God's Son. His identity was revealed through the power of His word.

In Isaiah the Lord said, “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish...so is my word that goes forth out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Jesus is the Word of God in the fullest sense according to His divine nature. He accomplished God's desire and achieved the purpose for which He was sent into the world, by becoming our Saviour through His sinless life and by the power of His sacrificial death, for the atonement of human sin. Jesus revealed His glory as the only begotten Son of God from eternity, by the power of His word. When Jesus spoke it was done! The deaf could hear. The lame could walk. The dead were raised to life. Jesus continues to reveal Himself to us through His word. In His word spoken by the mouths of the apostles and evangelists, He shows Himself our Saviour and calls us to put our faith in Him. Jesus came to accomplish God's desire, which is our salvation. His word is powerful to give us faith. His word will keep us in God's grace until the day comes when faith passes into sight and He is revealed as the King of Glory to the whole world and as the Saviour of all who believe.

In our gospel John the Baptist reveals Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” He tells his disciples how the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and rested upon Jesus at His baptism. John may have recognized Jesus as his cousin by looking at Him, but he didn't recognize Jesus as the Lamb of God by His physical appearance. He said, “I myself did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.” John recognized Jesus as the Lamb and Son of God through the word God spoke to Him. At Jesus' baptism John heard the Father say, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” Jesus' disciples believed and followed through the word that John spoke to them. We discern by outward appearance and so we say ‘seeing is believing.’ God discerns by the Spirit through whom He searches the spirit of human beings. And so for God believing comes before seeing. God's word opens our hearts to believe in Jesus, so that with eyes of faith we can see Him as our Saviour and Lord.

Faith comes through the hearing of the word of God, which is why the word of God is central to faith and essential to our lives as believers. During His ministry people saw Jesus was the Saviour through His words and by the powerful signs His word accomplished. We also see Jesus our Saviour through His word and see its effects in our lives! The psalmist sang, "Your word O Lord, is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." But one day, a whole bunch of Jesus' disciples stopped listening and stopped following Him. They would no longer listen to His words. His words sounded downright crazy to them. Jesus turned to the twelve who remained and asked, if they also wanted to leave. Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." Some would not allow the word to sink into their hearts, take root and create faith. But faith was created, nurtured and given growth in the hearts of those who took Jesus' words to heart and allowed it to have its effect. God's word never returns to Him empty. It always accomplishes His desire by creating and sustaining faith in the hearts of those who abide in it and allow it to do its work.

In our New Testament lesson St. Paul speaks about the revealing of Jesus on the last day when He returns as King of glory and Lord of all. On that great and glorious day He will be recognized by appearance. In the letter to the Philippians Paul writes, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." For some people this will be a confession inspired by fear and forced by terror. In the world this His appearing is called "Dooms Day!" In Revelation chapter six, the day of Christ is seen from the perspective of those who refused to believe and would not receive Jesus through His word. They call out to the mountains saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?" But for those who believe, for those who received Jesus through His word, that day has a much different appearance. It is a day of hallelujahs, celebration, joy and gladness. On that day we will not see the angry face of God, but the love of God shining in the face of Jesus our Saviour.

In our New Testament lesson Paul reminds us that God gives us every spiritual gift we need to be ready for the revealing of Jesus on the day of His return. First He gives us faith through the word and washing of baptism. Jesus abides with our spirits by virtue of our baptism into His death and resurrection. In the water of Holy Baptism we receive the forgiveness of our sins, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the promise of sharing in Christ's resurrection to a life in which sin, sorrow, death and sadness are forgotten and forever gone. The Holy Spirit makes His dwelling within us, so that our bodies are temples of God. Jesus is also present to us through our sisters and brothers, with whom we share faith in Christ. When Christians gather for worship, prayer and fellowship, Jesus is with us in a special way. He said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name I am there with them." Jesus comes to us in love and reveals Himself as our forgiving Saviour, especially through the sacrament of His holy body and precious blood. In the gift of His body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, He raises us up in forgiveness He gives us strength and encouragement for daily living through the Holy Spirit who empowers us to walk in newness of life. In all of these ways God gifts us spiritually and prepares us for the great revealing of Jesus, so that on that day we will receive Him in love and embrace Him with joy and gladness.

God wants everyone to see Him in love and receive Him in faith. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world. He sent Jesus into the world to remove the burden of sin from the human heart and to lift the condemnation of death from the head of every human soul. God wants everyone to believe and come to a knowledge of His love through faith in Jesus as their Saviour. He sent His word to share in our humanity and earn our salvation through His sinless life and the blood He shed on the cross. He sends His word so that by hearing the Holy Spirit may give us faith to believe, sustain our faith and give it growth until faith is made full in our share in His resurrection to everlasting life.

God sends His word throughout the world through the ministry of the church. This season of Epiphany we remember in particular the missionaries supported in part by our church, Lutheran Church-Canada. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news of God's love in Jesus our Saviour. Think for a moment of some of the people who have shared the good news of Jesus with you during your life and how through their words you came to faith in Jesus. He speaks to us daily and encourages our faith through the Holy Scriptures. The scriptures make us wise unto eternal life by showing us Jesus our Saviour. God gives us encouragement, support and consolation through the sharing of our faith as sisters and brothers. In all these ways God gifts us spiritually that we may share our faith and remain strong in our faith until the great day of revelation, when faith passes into sight and we see Jesus face to face. The Lord who has blessed us with faith in Jesus by the word and working of the Holy Spirit, keep us to that day. In Jesus' Name. Amen