

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 18 January 2026 - The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Lectionary Readings (*depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on*)

Isaiah 49.1-7, Psalm 40.1-12; I Corinthians 1 1-9; John 1.29-42

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Jane Rees, Priest - Associate Vicar, March (Benefice)

Our gospel reading today continues our Epiphany season of revelation - this time it is not the magi but John the Baptist who receives a revelation of who Jesus is. Soon we will hear about Simeon and Anna who receive a revelation of the baby Jesus as the messiah when he was presented in the temple thirty years earlier.

Today it is John the Baptist who declares what has been shown to him by the Holy Spirit: He says:

Look! the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

John speaks to his own disciples, those who were waiting for the Messiah to come.

The Messiah they and so many religious jews were anticipating was a military figure, a leader, one who would deliver the jews from the occupation of the Roman Empire.

A Lamb doesn't quite fit with these images though.

I wonder what comes to mind when you think of a lamb - perhaps one who is docile, gentle and a follower of the shepherd. Lambs are often regarded as vulnerable and innocent.

Moreover, it was the lambs that were without blemish or defect that were offered as the sacrifice at the temple for sins.

To describe Jesus as the Lamb of God would have been a new idea to John's followers

because it pointed to a different kind of Messiah. Jesus was coming as a deliverer yes but in a spiritual way - delivering the people not from the oppression of human empire but from the spiritual evil of sin and death.

We are familiar with the phrase Lamb of God today as it is often part of our Christian worship.

Within our Eucharist or Holy Communion, we may say or sing what we call the Agnus Dei - Latin for lamb of God. Between the Lord's prayer and receiving communion we repeat

“Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace!”

Sometimes depending on the liturgy, the priest will hold up the consecrated host for all to see

and say behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

These words come from our John’s gospel reading this morning - they are not found in any other gospel.

Our text today uses the word “Look” but the word ‘behold’ is found in our older translations like the King James version

It is a wonderful old word which means to focus and look closely at. To discern. To contemplate by giving full attention to. A modern translation might say something like - don’t miss this - look closely! I wonder whether Behold is a word you still use in your own conversations and discussions today?

John the Baptist encourages his disciples then and disciples of Christ today to really look at Jesus. To give our full attention in contemplation and adoration.

To remember that he is the sacrifice - the perfect sacrifice - for our sins.

To contemplate that our sins are taken away - that is cast down, thrown aside. Gone forever.

This season of Epiphany is an opportunity before we enter the new season of Lent to take time to Behold and to ponder on Jesus as the Lamb of God.

We can do that practically by sharing in Holy Communion or by taking a few moments at the beginning or end of the worship to be still and remember Jesus’ sacrifice. We might perhaps have icons or artwork in our church or candles or a cross or stained glass. There may be something visual that we can behold to help us contemplate the Lamb of God and be encouraged by his sacrifice and his victory over death and sin.

It was Pope Francis who reminded us not to assume that we already know Jesus, that we have already learnt everything about him. So let us follow the encouragement of John the Baptist and look to Jesus once again.

Let us pray for the revelation of the Holy Spirit to guide our churches so that as we Behold and Look we may truly see Him, the Lamb of God with new eyes, with the eyes of faith and rejoice as He draws ever near. Amen.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to

feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Suggestions for intercessions: Based on CW prayers:

Let us by prayer and intercession with thanksgiving make our requests to God
Gracious God,

We pray for peace, justice and reconciliation throughout the world. We pray for the
honouring of human rights, and for the relief of the oppressed.

We give thanks for all that is gracious in the lives of men, women and children.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for the renewal of the Church in faith, love and service as we seek to continually
look to Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away our sins.

We pray for Dagmar, our bishop and for the life of this parish/ community.

We give thanks for the gift of your word, the grace of the sacraments and the fellowship of
your people.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

We pray for this local community and for all people in their daily life and work.

We pray for the young and the elderly, for families, and all who are alone.

We give thanks for human skill and creativity and all that reveals your loveliness.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for those who are in need;

for the sick, sorrowful and bereaved,

Remembering those who have particularly asked for our prayers this week

We pray for all who bring comfort, care and healing. We give thanks for human love and friendship and for all that enriches our daily lives. Within our own community we pray this week especially for....

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer

We remember those who have been recently bereaved, those who have died, and the anniversary of whose death will be remembered this week...

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

Be thou my vision

One of the following:

Behold! The Lamb of God O Thou for sinners slain

Behold the Lamb of God the Holy Baptist cries

Behold the Lamb of God

Behold the Lamb (of God)

Hark the glad sound the Saviour comes

Just as I am

O for a closer walk with God

There is a redeemer

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Worthy is the Lamb

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material

- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)