**2nd sunday of epiphany- january 17, 2021**

**zion evangelical lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this 2nd Sunday of Epiphany where we continue to gather in love for one another from the safety of our homes. This pandemic is ever changing, we are now facing stay-at-home orders for the next month. These next few months are going to be difficult, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I urge you to continue calling one another offering companionship and hope, especially to our folks in long-term care and those who live alone.

The funeral service for Eileen Mary Hartung took place at the Futher-Franklin Funeral Home in Wellesley on Tuesday January 12. Interment took place at Zion. We remember her in our prayers this morning.

The sermon this week is prepared by the Rev. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop of the Alberta Synod. It is part of an Epiphany series of sermons provided by the ELCIC.

Our goto meeting coffee hour takes place today at 11, please consider joining us!

Thank you so much for your monetary support and prayers in 2020. Zion ended the year on a positive note for which we are grateful.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Listen, God Is Calling: Neno lake Mungu* (ELW 513)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7ekBDXdd2I>

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]**

A reading from 1 Samuel.

1Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.  
  2At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; 3the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” 5and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. 6The Lord called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” 7Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. 8The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. 9Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’ ” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.  
  10Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” [11Then the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. 12On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. 14Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”  
  15Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” 17Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” 18So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”  
  19As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 20And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.]

**PSALM: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18**

1Lord, you have searched me out; O Lord, you  have known me.  
2You know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.  
3You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways.  
4Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O Lord, know it  altogether.   
5You encompass me, behind  and before, and lay your  hand upon me.  
6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain to it.  
3For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.  
14I will thank you because I am marvellously made; your works are wonderful, and I  know it well.   
15My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.  
16Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; my days were fashioned before they came to be.  
17How deep I find your thoughts, O God! How great is the  sum of them!  
18If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand; to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

12“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. 13“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. 15Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” 17But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. 19Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

**GOSPEL: John 1:43-51**

The holy gospel according to John.

43The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” 44Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” 46Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” 47When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” 48Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.” 49Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” 50Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” 51And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON-** Bishop Larry Kochendorfer-Synod of Alberta and the Territories

*Let us pray:*

*Come, Holy Spirit, that we may see and taste the grace of God afresh. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might share the grace of God with others. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might bear witness with our whole lives to the grace of God made manifest and available to us in Jesus. Amen.*

Welcome to this sermon series that our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is providing for congregations throughout the Sundays after Epiphany. I am Larry Kochendorfer and I serve as the Bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. It is great to be with you this Sunday.

It was a Thursday. It was a moment so alive that it was almost unbearable. It was so simple really. I had brought our niece, Amanda, who was fifteen at the time, and our youngest son, Jordan, who was then four, over to the church on a Thursday afternoon and while I was in my office returning a couple of telephone calls they were in the sanctuary.

With the phone calls completed I threw on my coat and walked into the sanctuary where I stopped in a moment of epiphany, a moment of revealing, a moment filled with the glory of God – God’s presence – wonderful and mysterious. Amanda was sitting at the piano playing while Jordan was distributing communion to his invisible congregants who were kneeling at the altar rail. After a moment he saw me standing at the door to the sanctuary and he yelled out to me, “We’re playing communion, Dad!” And I looked at this four-year-old dressed in grey sweats, with a face still partially covered with lunch, and his face glowing with an utterly new discovery. He was sharing communion.

And I saw a glimpse of God’s presence, a revelation of God’s work – the father, the pastor in me saw, in a fleeting moment, the emerging worshipper, communion sharer, worship leader in our son – something so touching, so incandescent, so alive that it was almost beyond bearing – and I was changed – transformed.

Is it simply too ordinary? Too unsuspecting? Too unexpected? Or is it too wonderful, this moment of clarity, of unveiling, of revealing, of God’s presence?

We have entered the season of Epiphany. A season of revealing. Of appearance. Of manifestation. Epiphany: an immediate and meaningful understanding of something. Surprising. Sudden. Profound. Epiphany: an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure. A revelation.

What is revealed in this season is what it means that God became human. That God entered our world, no longer satisfied just to be with us but now is one of us. When that happens, when the incarnation happens, we change too. Our humanity changes. Suddenly, who we see ourselves to be can no longer remain the same because we have seen God in who we are.

We tend to expect that Epiphany is only about the revelation of Jesus. About seeing Jesus, of witnessing Jesus in various revealing moments. It is not supposed to be about being found ourselves.

But John’s Gospel invites us to imagine that these can be one and the same. That is, seeing Jesus in those revelatory moments, those unexpected moments is also when you find yourself — who you are, who you are called to be. In those moments of seeing Jesus you realize your identity as a follower, a disciple; and you see a glimpse, perhaps a new glimpse of something you have not seen before when it comes to your own faith story, your own understanding of what it means to be a disciple, your answering of your baptismal call: “follow me.”

Maybe this epiphany season might take on a mirror effect. That is, when you hear these texts, when you look for Jesus, when you experience these revelatory moments of Jesus, you simultaneously see something about yourself, and ask what does this mean?

John’s Gospel is full of these moments of epiphany, and of what following Jesus will look like.

For this Gospel writer it will mean taking John 3:16 seriously. It will mean taking the witness of the woman at the well seriously. It will mean finding those who have been cast out of communities for their courage to confess their faith in Jesus...like the man born blind (John 9:34). It will mean believing that the Spirit is indeed your very breath as Jesus sends you out into the world (John 20:21-22). It will mean being thrown out yourself (16:2), rejected for insisting that God’s love for the world and everyone in it – everyone – is actually true.

The incarnation of Jesus changes everything. The revealing of Jesus changes us. These epiphanies transform people. Listen to Martin Luther King, Jr., who we will remember tomorrow, and his description of an epiphany and his response in his book, Stride Toward Freedom:

*I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud.*

*The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. “I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone.”*

*At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: “Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.” Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

Martin Luther King, Jr. was transformed by this epiphany often referred to as his “vision in the kitchen.”

Nathaniel’s epiphany, in which he saw who Jesus was, changed Nathaniel, who, then, proclaimed Jesus as: Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel.

It was a Thursday – it was a moment so alive that it was almost unbearable....“We’re playing communion Dad!”

I suspect that most of us glimpse these moments of epiphany, of aliveness, of revelation, of unveiling – of God’s presence – the Spirit’s work – in the regular, ordinary patterns of life: in a blinding moment of conversion; in a moment of deepened awareness of the presence of God; in a moment of realizing the truth and call of Christ; in the play ritual of a child; through parents, ever so lovingly, showing a child how to swing a bat; through our children singing “You Are Holy, You are Whole,” “Beautiful Savior,” “O Come All Ye Faithful”; in the hike up a mountain to pray; in a word of absolution; in an act of justice and peace; in a moment of sacramental meeting – when we hear the drops of water drowning and bringing with the Word new life – when the bread in our hands and the wine on our lips suddenly acquires a flavor and a vintage which takes us out of time and out of our human limitations and intoxicates us with God.

As we glimpse God at work, this unveiling, this revelation, this epiphany – we hold it in our heart and we return to life, different, transformed ourselves because for one shining, mysterious moment we have seen.

These glimpses do not evaporate our doubts or tell us what to do next, nothing will be visibly different but beloved people of God, siblings in Christ – it does make a difference to have seen, even for a moment, a taste, a glimpse, something so alive that it is almost beyond bearing, for we return to daily life, back to work, back to ministry, to family, to this time of COVID pandemic. Different, changed, transformed, back to where mission and ministry is engaged, where the love of God is shared, and where grace is gifted.

Where we are invited to live out our baptismal calling, to follow Jesus, in the midst of our daily lives:

*to live among God’s faithful people,*

*to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,*

*to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,*

*to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,*

*and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Epiphany is a short season. Expect to discover many things about Jesus. And in the process, anticipate learning something about yourself. Sometimes the change is monumental. Sometimes incremental. Either way, something will happen. Something epiphanous!

*Let us pray,*

*Into your hands, almighty God, we place ourselves: our minds to know you, our hearts to love you, our wills to serve you, for we are yours.*

*Into your hands, incarnate Savior, we place ourselves: receive us and draw us after you, that we may follow your steps; abide in us and enliven us by the power of your indwelling.*

*Into your hands, O hovering Spirit, we place ourselves: take us and fashion us after your image; let your comfort strengthen, your grace renew, and your fire cleanse us, soul and body, in life and in death, in this world of shadows and in your changeless world of light eternal, now and forever. Amen.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

**HYMN OF THE DAY*Here I Am, Lord* (ELW 574)**

1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?"  
  
Refrain  
Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.

2 "I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them.  
Whom shall I send?" Refrain  
  
3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?" Refrain

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need. *A brief silence.*

For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvellously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable. We pray for peace and stability in the United States as the transition of power and Inauguration takes place this coming week, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick, injured, or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound, especially Eddy, Elaine, Susie, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Joe, Greg, Tyler, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Diane, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For residents and workers of long-term care and retirement homes. for hospitals overwhelmed with cases, for people who are lonely and feeling isolated, for all who are sick with Covid, for all who have gotten the vaccine and all who will get it in the future. For peopleCare in Tavistock, Greenwood Court in Stratford, Caressant Care Retirement Home in Listowel, and all other homes in outbreak, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us, especially Eileen Hartung, that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD (ELW p. 220)**

Let us pray.

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

May God the creator strengthen you, Jesus the beloved fill you, and the Holy Spirit the comforter + keep you in peace. **Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*O Jesus, I Have Promised* (ELW 810)**

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
remain forever near me,  
my master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle  
if you are by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway

if you will be my guide.

2 Oh, let me feel you near me;  
the world is ever near.  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear.  
My foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, then draw nearer  
to shield my soul from sin.

3 Oh, let me hear you speaking  
in accents clear and still  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will.  
Now speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
now speak and make me listen,  
O Guardian of my soul.  
  
4 O Jesus, you have promised  
to all who follow you  
that where you are in glory  
your servant shall be too.  
And Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
oh, give me grace to follow,  
my master and my friend.

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1. Martin Luther King Jr, Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story, 1st edition [©1958 Harper & Brothers], 124–125.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Affirmation of Baptism. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Additional Prayers – Commitment. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)