

Gospel lesson

Having heard about Jesus's baptism last week, this week we hear of John the Baptist announcing the Messiah and Jesus receiving disciples.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/vb-john-1/>;
credit: VideoBible.com

John 1:29-42

NRSV

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'

³¹ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel."

³² And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.

³³ I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

³⁴ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

³⁵ The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples,

³⁶ and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸ When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

³⁹ He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

⁴¹ He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed).

⁴² He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>



picture from MMMS collection

I have a couple of batteries here. Can you tell me what is different about them? <Let them respond>

One is single-use, and the other is rechargeable. What do you do with them when they run out of energy? <Let them respond>

So which one will last longer, until I have to buy another battery? <Let them respond>

People talk about having energy. Would you say people are more like single-use or rechargeable? Why? <Let them respond>

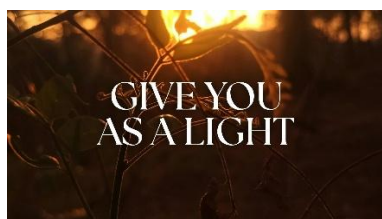
I think God established the Sabbath for us to take time to recharge rather than be tossed aside when we run out of energy. How can we recharge when tired? How do you recharge? <Let them respond>

From God comes all life, all light, all energy. I think it is important for us to invite God in when we take time to recharge, that our souls may be renewed. And when that happens, may God use you as a light for others.

<Hymn "Would I Have Answered When You Called">

TFWS #2137>

Message: Give You as a Light



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Light of the world who constantly renews us,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may be more energized for You, to share Your
light of love more fully with others. Amen.

We continue the "Glory Revealed" series today with
"Give You as a Light:"

"If we are called to be a light to the nations, we
must be willing to name the places where evil and
suffering live in the shadows... to tell one
another the truth of what is happening around us
and how God is at work and calls us to be at work
in response to the troubles throughout the world.

When we are weary, worried, and worn from all that
is wrong in the world, we must remind one another
that God, who gives us as a light, is the source of
our light."



picture from Pam Simmons

On Christmas eve, during the candlelight service, we lit a flame from the candles on the altar and brought it down the aisle. That flame was presented to the first person in each pew, so that they could light their candle from it. But the flames did not just stay there.

Each person with the lit candle had a responsibility: to hold their light for the next person to light their candle from it. Some people's candles blew out before the song was done. They needed to receive light again from another person to participate with their candle lit, and those around them were very happy to help. It was good to see everyone being generous in sharing their candlelights.

The flame from the altar had spread around to all. With everyone sharing their lights, the whole sanctuary was lit even when the electric lights overhead were shut off. It was warm and beautiful.

After the service, the candles were collected for use again next year. Each one holds the potential for providing a flame when light is needed in darkness.

The world is full of darkness, isn't it? It has been throughout human history. Back in Isaiah's day, during the exile, the Israelites were much as people are today: striving to have enough food to eat, clothes to wear, a safe place to sleep at night, and

worried about the political climate. Yet God was with them, just as God is with us today.

Isaiah spoke to them as a light in the darkness, like the light coming from the altar during the candlelight service. Even before the service started, as people took seats, we knew who would receive light for the rest of the pew; before Isaiah was born, God planned to have him be a messenger of the divine for the people. Lit with the hope for renewed life, he shared it with them; they shared it with one another until ultimately it was shared with all the world.

What hope has God given you? With whom are you sharing it? Are you paying attention to who needs the divine light of hope and love brought to them?



picture from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bog,_Okehampton_Common_-_geograph.org.uk_-_683794.jpg;
credit: Derek Harper / Bog,
Okehampton Common / [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

The psalmist spoke of being stuck in a miry bog from which the Lord drew him out, and blessed those who did not “go astray after false gods!” It is easy today to get stuck in an emotional paralysis, lost in the miry bog of social media that fills our lives with anger, fear, and hatred of others.

Sometimes we just need God’s hand to draw us out of the mire, to put us somewhere emotionally safe and solid. There are many avenues through which God may do that:

- † Prayer and bible study [in which we listen and seek the Lord] refocuses us on the grace God brings us. We often find reassurance that God is the One in

ultimate control, not those driving the chaos of the moment.

- † God may work through other individuals to bring us the help we need, such as a listening ear or a helping hand. If you receive the light of hope from someone else in this way, be sure to share it too. “Pay it forward” as well as back.
- † God may give us focus on something productive, perhaps on something to push back a little on the chaos overwhelming us or perhaps on something that is just fun, or to fulfill an identified want/need. When our purpose comes from God, it is healthy and tends to build community, inviting others into it.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/vb-john-1/>;
credit: VideoBible.com

John the Baptist had a purpose, to point everyone to Jesus. He even had his own disciples go follow Jesus instead of him. Andrew's excitement was lit after speaking with Jesus, so he passed it on to his brother Simon, who became the rock – Peter – upon whom the Church was founded. Through Peter's work and the work of those whose faith was lit from that, many, many more people became followers of Christ.

You claim to follow Christ. Whose candle of faith have you helped light by sharing the love of God? Think also of whose faith candle is yet to be lit, with whom you might share the holy flame.

I know that you have shared the love of Christ. Like Paul observed of the Corinthians, “I give thanks to

my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,” for you have shared it well with me. I see that “the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.”

And this world desperately needs those spiritual gifts to be applied; our world always does better when we put God first. Do not forget, though, that you need regular recharging like the battery we talked about earlier. You cannot share the flame of God’s love if you are burnt out.

- † So be sure to get some rest as the world spins seemingly out of control.
- † Spend time with God. Where and how do you best connect with our Lord? What feels holy?
- † Once you are recharged, share God’s love and grace.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-graphics>

Let God give you as a light to the world. You may do that one-one-one or in group settings; ideally, your life will point people toward Christ in all that you say and do.

- † Seek truth, not slanted propaganda. There are many fact-checking tools on the internet for stuff thrown out on social media. Closer to home, try talking to the individuals involved to understand better what a situation truly is.

Too often, we get caught up in one perspective and

start dehumanizing those who think differently. It is important to remember that we are all God's children, all called to live in love.

When love seems to be missing from a situation, how can we best introduce it? How can we bring light to someone who is lost in darkness, if we are in the dark about them?

Being a light for others can be pretty exhausting, so be sure to start over again with getting rest and spending time with God – so that you can repeatedly be a light for others to draw nearer to Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And with that in mind, please pray with me now?

Guide our feet, Lord. Show us the light of grace when we would judge others too harshly. Warm our hearts with the glow of your love when we would spew icy words of spite. Illumine our souls with joyful delight when sadness tries to take over the day. Shine brightly on us today, Lord, until we reflect your glory as a witness to this world. Amen.

<Above prayer written by Kwasi Kena, *The Africana Worship Book Year A* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 84; reposted on <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/glory-revealed/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-liturgical-resources>.>

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