

The Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 18, 2026

Glory Be to God the Father

Lutheran Service Book 506, Lutheran Worship 173, The Lutheran Hymnal 244

1 Glo - ry be to God the Fa - ther, Glo - ry be to
2 Glo - ry be to Him who loved us, Washed us from each
3 Glo - ry to the King of an - gels, Glo - ry to the
4 Glo - ry, bless - ing, praise e - ter - nal! Thus the choir of

God the Son, Glo - ry be to God the Spir - it:
spot and stain; Glo - ry be to Him who bought us,
Church's King, Glo - ry to the King of na - tions;
an - gels sings; Hon - or, rich - es, pow'r, do - min - ion!

Great Je - ho - vah, Three in One! Glo - ry,
Made us kings with Him to reign! Glo - ry,
Heav'n and earth, your prais - es bring! Glo - ry,
Thus its praise cre - a - tion brings. Glo - ry,

glo - ry While e - ter - nal a - ges run!
glo - ry To the Lamb that once was slain!
glo - ry To the King of glo - ry sing!
glo - ry, Glo - ry to the King of kings!

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

- L** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?
C **But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.** (*Psalm 130:3–4*)
L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:
C **God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**
(Luke 18:13)
L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
C **Amen.**

Introit Psalm 19:1–4a, b; antiphon Psalm 19:14

- L** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
C **The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**
L Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
C **There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.**
L Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun.
C **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**
L Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have mercy on us. |

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
C **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.**
L Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
C **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
L Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.
C **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Isaiah 49:1–7

¹Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.

²He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.

³And he said to me, “You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”

⁴But I said, “I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the LORD,
and my recompense with my God.”

⁵And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him;
and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—

⁶he says:
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

⁷Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,
the servant of rulers:
“Kings shall see and arise;
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the Lord, all nations!
C **Extol him, all peoples!**
L For great is his steadfast love toward us,
C **and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.**
L Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
C **bring an offering, and come into his courts!**

Psalm 40:1–11

- L** ¹I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.
C ²**He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**
L ³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.
C ⁴**Blessèd is the man who makes the LORD his trust,
who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!**
L ⁵You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.
C ⁶**Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.**
L ⁷Then I said, “Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:
C ⁸**I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”**
L ⁹I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;
behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.
C ¹⁰**I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.**
L ¹¹As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me;
C **your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!**

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

¹Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,
²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:
³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,
⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.
C **Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.**

John 1:29–42a

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1st chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁹The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” ³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.” ³³I 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.’ ³⁴And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴²He brought him to Jesus.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

The Apostles’ Creed

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Lutheran Service Book 394, Lutheran Worship 88, The Lutheran Hymnal 134



1 Songs of thank - ful - ness and praise, Je - sus, Lord, to Thee we raise,
2 Man - i - fest at Jor-dan's stream, Proph-et, Priest, and King su-preme;
3 Man - i - fest in mak-ing whole Pal - sied limbs and faint - ing soul;
4 Sun and moon shall dark-ened be, Stars shall fall, the heav'ns shall flee;
5 Grant us grace to see Thee, Lord, Pres - ent in Thy ho - ly Word—



Man - i - fest-ed by the star To the sa - ges from a - far,
And at Ca - na wed-ding guest In Thy God-head man - i - fest;
Man - i - fest in val - iant fight, Quell-ing all the dev-il's might;
Christ will then like light-ning shine, All will see His glo-rious sign;
Grace to im - i - tate Thee now And be pure, as pure art Thou;



Branch of roy - al Da - vid's stem In Thy birth at Beth - le - hem:
Man - i - fest in pow'r di - vine, Chang-ing wa - ter in - to wine;
Man - i - fest in gra-cious will, Ev - er bring-ing good from ill;
All will then the trum - pet hear, All will see the Judge ap - pear;
That we might be-come like Thee At Thy great e - piph - a - ny



An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
An - thems be to Thee ad-dressed, God in man made man - i - fest.
Thou by all wilt be con-fessed, God in man made man - i - fest.
And may praise Thee, ev - er blest, God in man made man - i - fest.

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Devotional thoughts:

You may have noticed that the British royal family has been in the news lately. Did you watch the funeral of Queen Elizabeth a few years ago? It was a grand and solemn ceremony. More recently, a member of the royal family has been making headlines in a less than elegant and tasteful way.

I haven't met any kings or queens, princes or princesses. I'm not friends with presidents, governors, or mayors although I did shake hands once with a man who shook hands with a man who shook hands with Winston Churchill.

What about you? Have you had personal encounters with the rich and famous? Are you on a first-name basis with powerful politicians or celebrities?

When I attended the seminary in St. Louis, I worked for a top-flight caterer. This was my first exposure to high society and the closest that I have come to real celebrities. I could regale you with stories of things that happened in those days while I was wearing my little white waiter jacket (We had red ones, too.). I will refrain from this indulgence but here's one detail to give you a flavor of the work. On at least two occasions, I was tipped \$50! This was a king's ransom in those days when my regular job at the seminary paid only about \$2.85 an hour.

The odd thing is, I almost never knew who those wealthy people were. We would go to a large home or a venue. Set up and serve the dinner. When it was all over, we would pack up and go home.

Now and then, someone would reveal to me that a TV star, business leader, or politician had been at the party. As I think back, it was probably best that I didn't know.

The Epiphany Season is like those dinners in St. Louis. Jesus is the most important person in history but most of the people around Him didn't know it. During this season of the Church Year, we learn how God revealed Jesus to be His only-begotten Son to the world.

On Epiphany, we noted that God led the Wise Men to baby Jesus with a miraculous star and a prophecy from Micah (Micah 5:2). Last Sunday, we heard the voice of God Himself declare from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Throughout most of history on this Sunday, we would have learned about Jesus manifesting His glory by changing water into wine at the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). [We'll have to wait two years until we hear it read in church again.]

The fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior remained hidden from the people of the world until God chose to reveal Him at the proper time (Galatians 4:4-5). Today, we learn how God showed John the Baptist and his disciples who Jesus really and truly is.

This all happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing after Jesus' baptism (John 1:28). John was with his disciples as he saw Jesus coming toward him. It was at this point that John made this most startling announcement, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" This was a great epiphany for his disciples. But they shouldn't have been embarrassed by their ignorance. Although Jesus was John's cousin, he also had been unaware of Jesus' real identity and mission until he baptized Jesus.

He explained to his disciples that his ministry of baptizing was for the very purpose of revealing Jesus as the Messiah. God had informed John that as he was baptizing the throngs of people who were flocking to him that one of them would be special. This last prophet of the Old Testament was told directly by God, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."

Can you imagine how John's heart must have leapt when he witnessed the Holy Spirit descend like a dove upon Jesus and heard the voice from heaven declare, "This is my beloved Son!" At that moment God gave John an epiphany. John reported that it was made manifest to Him that this is the Son of God.

Now it was time for John to make it fully known to his disciples just who Jesus is. He made it as clear as he could. Not only is Jesus the Son of God, he told them twice, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" In these words, John's disciples received a great epiphany. The Son of God would be the sacrifice that would take away the sins of the world!

John said, "Behold." We don't use the word "behold" much anymore but it is a perfect translation of the Greek word here. It means more than "look over there." It is an imperative that means literally, "Be sure to see this," "Don't miss it!"

Let me explain it this way. Imagine that you are talking with a group of men who are sitting on your right side. They have your full attention. Then all of a sudden, you hear someone out of view to your left shout, "Heads up!" Ignore his imperative at your own peril! He has just said, "Behold, I have tossed something to you. Don't miss it!"

What was so important and urgent for John's disciples to see? It was Jesus who is the very Lamb of God. We have never forgotten this title for Jesus given to Him by John the Baptist. It is used about 30 times in the Book of Revelation.

Every Latin student has learned this famous poem. Maybe you have heard it.

"Latin is a language

As dead as dead can be.

It killed the ancient Romans

And now it's killing me."

But contrary to the poem, a little Latin is good for us. Here's a Latin phrase that you may know, "Agnes Dei." It is Latin for "Lamb of God." It is the title of the song we sing after the Words of Institution and before the distribution of the Lord's Supper. Here is the way I learned it, "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us, grant us Thy peace. Amen."

Not only should we "Behold" the "Lamb of God," we must never forget that He is the sacrifice that takes away all of our sins.

In Old Testament times, priests sacrificed lambs daily. But those sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of the one final sacrifice that would take away the sin of the world. The sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross was offered "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27). Jesus is the High Priest who offered up Himself as the final and complete sacrifice for sin. We recognize this every time we sing the "Agnes Dei."

When I was in the early grades of elementary school I learned addition and subtraction. I'm not sure what this is called in new math or newer math or newest math. However, in simpler times, I have heard that subtraction was sometimes called "take aways." Have you heard of that? This is what the Greek word means that is rightly translated, "takes away the sin of the world."

We often talk about forgiveness or remission of sins but it would also be good to remember that Jesus, the Lamb of God, takes away our sin. He doesn't leave any of it behind! He removes our sin from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). When Jesus takes our sins away, they are completely gone. God doesn't remember them anymore (Isaiah 43:25). He casts them into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:19).

This is a great epiphany for us! Jesus has totally and completely taken our sins away. There is nothing left for us to do to remove the stain of sin from our souls.

I know "sin" is another word that has fallen into disfavor. But everyone believes this phrase, "Nobody's perfect." We all have failings and faults. We all make spiritual mistakes and blunders. We all suffer from moral defects and blemishes. These are the things that the Lamb of God takes away from us! And not only from us, but He also takes them away from the whole world.

The Jewish people were waiting for a Messiah to save them. They may have had a few misconceptions about what that actually meant but it must have been a great epiphany to John's disciples that the Lamb of God, the Messiah, would take away not only their sins but the sins of the world.

No one is excluded from this promise! The Lamb of God welcomes all who come to Him in repentance and faith.

But not everyone comes to the Lamb of God. Some reject Him as did the scribes and Pharisees of His day. Others have not yet heard. They may not know it but they are waiting for their epiphanies.

When Andrew had His epiphany that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, he could not contain himself. He immediately went to find his own brother, Simon Peter. His message to Peter was, "We have found the Messiah."

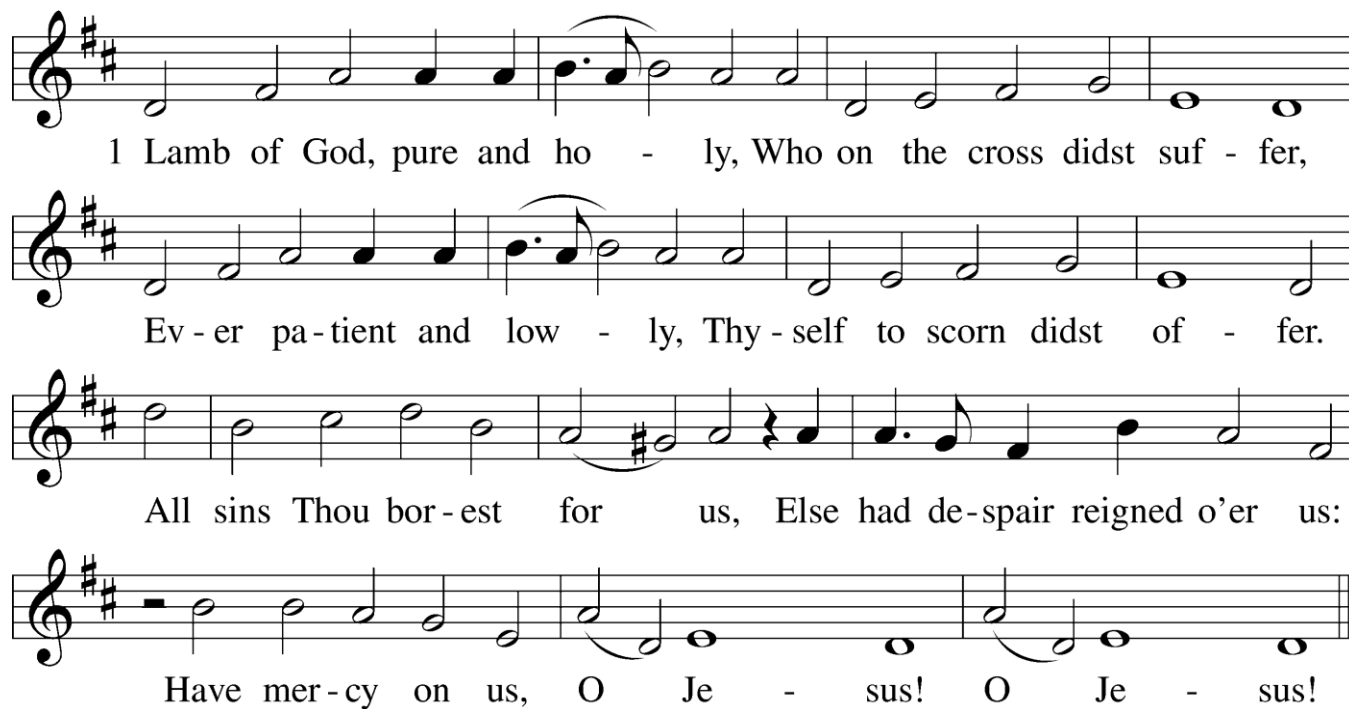
Technically, Andrew hadn't found the Messiah. John the Baptist pointed Him out.

Is there someone in your life waiting for an epiphany? Is there someone in your life who needs to behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? Can you give them a "heads up?"

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

Lutheran Service Book 434, Lutheran Worship 208, The Lutheran Hymnal 146



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Prayers

L We praise You, O Lord, for You declared it to be too light a thing that Jesus should redeem only the tribes of Jacob and instead made Him a light for all the nations. Fill our hearts with joy that He is the Savior of all, and grant that our voices may help spread Your salvation to the ends of the earth.

C Amen.

L Lord God, John the Baptist first revealed Your Son as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Open our hearts to receive the benefits of His sacrifice through faith that we may live in His kingdom forever.

C Amen.

L Heavenly Father, Andrew found his brother, Peter, and brought him to Jesus. Help us in our day to bring our family and friends to Jesus. Bless our pastors, teachers, and missionaries who work to bring Your word of salvation to the whole world.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, You faithfully watched over the tribes of Jacob, providing them both daily bread and redemption in abundant measure. Watch over the homes of Your people. Bless them with all that they need for this body and life, and preserve them in the glad confidence that Christ is their strength and their salvation.

C Amen.

L Lord, guide and give wisdom to our nation and its leaders, and to all judges and magistrates. Protect those who serve us as firefighters, police, disaster workers and medical personnel. Protect those in harm's way because of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East that cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Grant that the new found peace in Gaza would be sustained.

C Amen.

L Visit us in Your compassion, O Lord. Deliver the sick from their infirmity, the troubled from their afflictions, the grieving from their sorrow, and the dying from their fear. May all who cry to You receive grace according to Your will. Help each of us to bear our crosses with patience and grace.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, heavenly Father, grant that we who have celebrated the Epiphany of our Lord continue to have our eyes opened and learn more and more about the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C 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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

Just as I Am, without One Plea

Lutheran Service Book 570, Lutheran Worship 359, The Lutheran Hymnal 388



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea But that Thy
2 Just as I am and wait - ing not To rid my
3 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout With man - y a
4 Just as I am, poor, wretch - ed, blind; Sight, rich - es,



blood was shed for me And that Thou bidd'st me come to
soul of one dark blot, To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each
con - flict, man - y a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with - in, with -
heal - ing of the mind, Yea, all I need, in Thee to



Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
out, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.
find, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

5 Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

6 Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Week of The Second Sunday after Epiphany January 19 — 24, 2026

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Introit Psalm 19:1–4a, b; antiphon Psalm 19:14

- L** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.
- C** **The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**
- L** Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
- C** **There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.**
- L** Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun.
- C** **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**
- L** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.

Have you seen the spectacular images coming from the James Webb Space Telescope? They are quite amazing. Some of them are so astounding that I decided to learn more about this technological marvel.

I was surprised to discover that the Webb Telescope does not view visible light. It images the sky using infrared light. The NASA website explains that the images we see are not actual pictures coming from the telescope. They are computer generated based on data received from the telescope.

(<https://webb.nasa.gov/content/about/faqs/faqLite.html>). Nevertheless, they are beautiful.

We seem to be making remarkable discoveries with these pictures. Unfortunately, television news reports have neglected to mention the most important discovery of all. These pictures tell us something about God! Psalm 19:1 puts it this way, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Every time you look at the sky, whether you use a telescope or your naked eye, it is declaring the glory of God to you!

One of the most famous scientists of all time understood this. His name is Johannes Kepler. He is best known for his laws of planetary motion. His work also provided one of the foundations for Newton's theory of universal gravitation. Kepler believed that God created the universe. This caused him to try to understand the laws of nature. He was particularly interested in astronomy.

He wrote, “Those laws [of nature] are within the grasp of the human mind; God wanted us to recognize them by creating us after his own image so that we could share in his own thoughts.” He is credited with this profound statement, “I am merely thinking God's thoughts after Him.”

As much as we can learn about God by studying nature, there is one thing that we can never learn from nature. God must reveal it to us through His word. From the Bible, we learn about God's love for us and the mercy that is ours through Jesus. No telescope will ever tell us, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

L Let us pray. O Lord God, thank You for the beauty and splendor of creation. Grant us wisdom to seek You in Your holy word and learn about the love You have for us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

A Reflection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The memory of The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is honored by a national holiday in the United States. This is a fitting tribute to a man who made a significant impact on civil rights in America during the 20th Century.

Although he was a clergyman and often quoted the Bible and used it as themes for his speeches, he is more often seen as a political influencer today. On a day dedicated to his memory, it would be appropriate to remember some Bible passages that were important to him.

The first one that comes to mind is Amos 5:24: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” He made reference to it in his famous, “I have a Dream” speech in this sentence. “No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

The call for justice echoes mightily in our nation today. We are all interested in justice. Unfortunately, almost every political opinion today is expressed in terms of righteousness verses injustice. And of course, everyone's personal opinion is the very definition of righteousness and justice.

There is another emphasis in the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. that is often overlooked today. Matthew 5:44 was important to him, “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Many of those who proclaim their love for justice would do well to remember this aspect of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s message. His focus on non-violence is almost invisible today.

Let's take a step beyond Martin Luther King, Jr. to his father. His father's original name was Michael King. However, during a trip to Germany for a meeting of the Baptist World Alliance, he visited sites associated with the Reformation and Martin Luther. He was so inspired by what he learned, that he changed his name to Martin Luther King and his son's name to Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a good day to take a step beyond justice to forgiveness. Martin Luther knew all about justice before the Reformation. He knew about punishment and damnation. He knew that God required him to be righteous but no matter how hard he tried, he always fell short of God's demands.

What led to the Reformation was his rediscovery of the Gospel. It was his rediscovery of the forgiveness of sins received by faith for Christ's sake. This is what drove the Reformation, not a call for justice!

May Martin Luther King, Jr. Day be a day when we learn to sincerely pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Tuesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

When I was in high school, I remember having a theological discussion with a friend's mother. She was firmly convinced that people are basically good. She did her best to convince me that she was right.

I was raised in the Lutheran Church. We begin every service with confession and absolution. This helped me understand the sinful character of human nature.

I must admit that there are many people who perform noble acts of goodness. However, endless wars and threats of war make me doubt that people are basically good. It seems that every hurricane brings looters out of the woodwork. Terrible crimes are reported nightly on the news. Children suffer. Politicians argue. The list goes on. No, I can't be convinced that people are basically good.

But the bigger question in my mind is, "Why does God allow evil?" How would you answer someone who asked you that question? My response would be, "How should God deal with evil?"

If God chose to eliminate all evil, who of us would survive? Some might agree that He should eliminate murderers. Others might approve of God eradicating thieves. What about liars or those who disobey their parents? Let's not even think about adulterers or those who betray friendships.

If God were to eliminate evil, no one would survive! Instead, God chose to save us from evil rather than eliminate us. He did this by sending Jesus to be our savior.

The overarching theme of the Book of Revelation is that evil loses and God wins. God allows the world with all of its evil to continue so that more people would believe in Jesus and receive eternal life.

Along the way, God does restrain evil. He does this through godly people doing their duty and fulfilling their vocations. He does this through parents, teachers, and the police. He does it through honorable leaders and officials (Romans 13).

God also allows evil people to outsmart themselves. Psalm 2 tells us that God sits in heaven and laughs at their foolish plans.

Sometimes God takes direct action to protect His people. The Old Testament is filled with examples from Joseph in Egypt to Daniel in the Lions' Den.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Deliver us from Evil." Martin Luther explained it this way:

We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.¹

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your people and grant us Your peace through all our days; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Psalm 40:1–11

L ¹I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

C ²**He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

L ³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

C ⁴**Blessèd is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!**

L ⁵You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

C ⁶**Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.**

L ⁷Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

C ⁸**I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."**

L ⁹I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.

¹Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: *Kleine Katechismus - English.*, electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

- C** ¹⁰I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart;
 I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
 I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.
- L** ¹¹As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me;
- C** your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Thinking about Psalm 40, I did an internet search for famous duets (I'll explain that in a bit). I made a shocking discovery. I found a website that claimed to list the top twenty duets of all time. Although I recognized most of the duets on the list, there were none there that I would have considered the top ten! "Baby, It's Cold Outside" didn't even make the list! (Or "Dream a Little Dream of Me" by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.)

I was thinking of duets because duets are songs with two parts. Psalm 40 is a psalm with two parts. Our psalm for this week is the first part (Psalm 40:1-11[10]). The second part is Psalm 40:12 [11]-17).

The first part praises God for His wondrous deeds (v 5) of deliverance. It is a new song (v 3) of God's faithfulness. The second half is an appeal for God to help again and rescue him from the evils that have encompassed him. (v 12). He ends with "You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!" (v 17).

I can empathize with David. God has certainly blessed me in amazing ways throughout my life. However, present evil and danger dominate my mind when they come.

I need to remember God's faithfulness. He does not forget it. He has delivered me in the past and will continue to be faithful into the future.

Psalm 40 is not only a plea to God. It is a reminder to each of us that we should put our trust in God. He is our help and deliverer. Wickedness may appear to win for a time but it always fails when God steps forward to deliver me.

He has already won for us the Crown of Life. Nothing can take that from us. Our ultimate victory awaits us in the eternal mansions of heaven.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, we give thanks for all wondrous deeds of deliverance. Grant us faith to understand that You will never leave us or forsake us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Isaiah 49:1–7

¹Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.
²He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.
³And he said to me, “You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”
⁴But I said, “I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the LORD,
and my recompense with my God.”

⁵And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him;
and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—
⁶he says:
“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

⁷Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation,
the servant of rulers:
“Kings shall see and arise;
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves;
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

From early in May of 1527 through February 22 of 1530, Martin Luther lectured on the Book of Isaiah. His lectures are available to us in volumes 16 and 17 of *Luther's Works*, the American Edition. I thought that it would be good to look to him for insight this week as we consider Isaiah 49:1-7.

In his preface to Isaiah, Luther makes this important and insightful statement, “The chief and leading theme of all the prophets is their aim to keep the people in eager anticipation of the coming Christ.”² John the Baptist and his disciples were eagerly anticipating the coming of Christ when Jesus came to be baptized. They had been faithful in their reading of the Old Testament prophets and rejoiced to see the coming savior. This is why John’s

²Martin Luther, vol. 16, *Luther's Works, Vol. 16 : Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, Luther's Works, 16:3 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1969).

disciples were so willing to leave him and follow Jesus when John said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Speaking of chapter 49:1, Luther says this:

“YOU have heard that the prophet Isaiah and all other prophets deal with two things: First, they teach, terrify, console, and instruct their people and correct the rebels, and for that reason it was necessary to inculcate the issues of faith and good works. The second part was to give them direction concerning the coming Christ. Having completed the first part, the prophet proceeds to the second.

From this chapter to the end there is nothing but Christ, and although the prophet at the same time occasionally corrects and rebukes, the scope of this treatise has to do with Christ, with the calling of the Gentiles, and with the rejection of the Jews.”³

Isaiah contains four sections that are known as “Servant Songs.” In these songs, the Messiah is the servant who is speaking. Isaiah 49:1-7 is the second of the four servant songs. Read it again and you will clearly hear Jesus speaking.

The most striking thing found in these verses is in verse 6, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The Messiah would come to save not only the Jews but all nations even to the end of the earth! John the Baptist signaled that Jesus would fulfill this by being the Lamb of God who TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

Isaiah saw it long before Jesus was born. John the Baptist recognized it in Jesus when he saw Him. It continues to be true as God brings His Epiphany to us today. Jesus died for all that through Him everyone who believes in Him and trusts him would not perish but have eternal life!

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for welcoming us into Your family. Grant us grace to reach out to those who are not yet part of the flock of Christ through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

L Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have mercy on us.

³Martin Luther, vol. 17, *Luther's Works, Vol. 17 : Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther's Works*, 17:169 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1972).

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

¹Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's a great blessing for us that God allowed Paul to establish a church in Corinth. It also is a blessing that two of his letters are preserved.

Corinth was a cosmopolitan city and had all the problems that our modern cities experience. Yet, a Christian congregation flourished there.

Some people wring their hands because of the direction western civilization seems to be heading. They have suggested that the Christian church will not be able to cope with the neo-paganism we are experiencing. The church in Corinth proves that the Christian faith can flourish even in the harshest environments.

We may have our problems. It may be difficult to recover from the false values being thrust upon us every day. But just as in Corinth, God will bless His people in unexpected ways.

God continues to give us His grace in Christ Jesus. His promise to sustain us to the end is just as real today as it was for the Corinthian Christians.

We have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This is proof that God is faithful.

Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, Stanza 3, Public domain

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for overcoming evil through Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Grant that our lives would be free from sin that so easily fills the world around us. Give success to Your Church as we seek to bring the message of salvation to the people around us. Amen.

Saturday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Gradual Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8

- L** Praise the LORD, all nations!
C Extol him, all peoples!
L For great is his steadfast love toward us,
C and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
L Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
C bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Verse of the Day: John 1:29b

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia, Behold, the Lamb of God, Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia, Who takes away the sin of the world! Alleluia.

Kyrie

- L** O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Our gradual for the Epiphany Season brings a smile to my face and a wink to my eye. Psalm 117 is the shortest Psalm and the shortest chapter in the Bible. It's only two verses long. But it is a little too long for whoever authored our gradual. You may have noticed that the gradual is Psalm 117:1–2a; 96:8. For the curious, "Praise the Lord" is the part of verse 2 that is omitted.

This short Psalm encompasses the vision of Epiphany. All nations and all peoples will praise the Lord because of His steadfast love and faithfulness for us in Christ.

The nations first came to baby Jesus in the persons of the Wise Men. While Simeon held Jesus in his arms, he proclaimed Him to be "A light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32 KJV). After cleansing the temple, Jesus said, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers" (Mark 11:17).

Paul wrote to Timothy:

"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

You and I are part of the "nations" who "praise the Lord" because of Jesus and the salvation that He won for us on the cross. Epiphany is a time for us to celebrate more than ever that by God's grace in Christ, we have been included in the family of God.

Prayer: O God, during this Epiphany Season we are grateful that You have welcomed us into Your family and revealed Jesus to be our Savior and Lord. Move us to joyfully hear His word and share the message of salvation with all the nations and peoples of the world. Amen.

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