

Year B (2024) – Sundays after Epiphany

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN

SERIES EXPLANATION

“Epiphany” comes from a Greek word that means “reveal.” Today, if someone says, “I had an epiphany,” he means he had some extremely important, life-changing revelation. Within the Church Year, that is the purpose of the season of Epiphany—to reveal important truths about Jesus Christ, truths that will indeed change your life.

For most of his adult life, Jesus was known simply as Mary’s son. He followed his adoptive father, Joseph, into the carpentry business. People in his hometown of Nazareth probably thought of Jesus as a very nice man—hardworking, honest, a role model for others. (That is still how many think of Jesus today.) But around the age of thirty, the fuller truth about Jesus began to be revealed: his person, his power, his purpose. It started with Jesus standing in a river with John the Baptist. The biggest epiphany took place at a mountain, where select followers saw Jesus shining brighter than the sun. All these epiphanies—all these revelations about Jesus—changed the lives of everyone around him. In this season of Epiphany, as we follow Jesus from the river to the mountain, may they change us too.

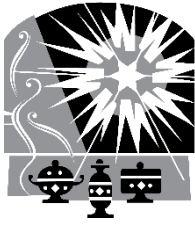
Our worship follows this pattern.

First Sunday after Epiphany	<i>It Begins with Baptism</i>
Second Sunday after Epiphany	<i>The Kindness in His Calling</i>
Third Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Committed to a Lofty Charge</i>
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Absolute Authority</i>
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	<i>The Devil’s Work Undone</i>
Last Sunday after Epiphany	<i>A Glimpse of His True Glory</i>

RESOURCE REMINDER

CW21’s *Altar Book* contains eight seasonal prayers of the church. These are spoken by the pastor, not responsive. *Service Builder* contains a wealth of additional prayers of the church. For the Epiphany season, there are prayers for Epiphany, Baptism of our Lord (not responsive), and Transfiguration.

There are also dialogues for Epiphany and Transfiguration that may be used to begin the service and Farewell to Alleluia to end Transfiguration. To find these, “Insert / Rite.” Then find the dialogues in the drop down at the top left under Seasonal Inserts. Farewell to Alleluia includes click on it, click delete, and select “Introduction to Holy Week” in the delete dropdown.



FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN
IT BEGINS WITH BAPTISM
(The Baptism of Our Lord)

NOTE

This year the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord falls on Saturday, January 6. Some worship planners may have that important service repeat (or only be observed) on Sunday, January 7. If that is the case, it is recommended that the readings for the Baptism of Our Lord be moved to the Second Sunday after Epiphany (the weekend of January 14). The proper readings for the Third Sunday after Epiphany (the weekend of January 21) would be used on that week. The normal readings for the Second Sunday after Epiphany (the weekend of January 14) would simply not be used this year.

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

At his baptism in the Jordan River Jesus was publicly anointed with the Holy Spirit and designated by God the Father as his chosen Messiah. Thus, Jesus' baptism was the beginning of his public ministry. Jesus' baptism revealed that he was not just a nice guy who could make a sturdy table. He was God's chosen servant, the one who had come to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus is the one willing to stand in our place as our substitute and Savior.

Jesus' baptism reveals to us who he really is. Our own baptism does the same! Our baptism was the beginning of a new and better life—eternal life!—a gift graciously given to us by our truest friend. Jesus' ministry and our eternity with him. It begins with baptism.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Isaiah 49:1-6 – Through the pen of the prophet Isaiah, the Messiah himself speaks, telling us of the work he would do when he was anointed at his baptism.

*Romans 6:1-11 – St. Paul connects our baptism to Christ, and he discusses the results of that connection in our lives.

Mark 1:4-11 – Jesus public ministry begins with the anointing he received in his baptism.

HYMNS

Opening	379 Christ, Your Footprints through the Desert
HOD	377 To Jordan's River Came Our Lord
Third/Distr	679 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It
Closing	692 All Who Believe and Are Baptized

(continued)

SERVICE OPTIONS

379 will likely require introduction, if your congregation doesn't yet know it. Its text matches the theme of the day and lessons perfectly, but the tune is unfamiliar. Perhaps have a cantor sing verse 1, a small group sing verse 2 in unison, and then have the congregation join on verses 3 and 4.

Service Builder includes a rite for Remembrance of Baptism that incorporates the Creed and is used in place of the Creed.



Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 14, 2024

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN
THE KINDNESS IN HIS CALLING

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

We try to hide our faults and failures from others. We want people to see us at our best. Perhaps we assume that if people knew what we were really like, they would want nothing to do with us. There's no hiding anything from God. He is all-seeing and all-knowing. Christ Jesus has witnessed our very worst, even the sins that only occurred in our heads. The psalmist says, "You perceive my thoughts from afar. You are familiar with all my ways" (139:2,3). Yet even though Jesus knows all our faults and failures, he badly wants something to do with us. So, he calls us to follow him. He wants us to be with him, secure in his love of forgiveness. Here is this week's epiphany: Jesus shows kindness when he calls us to discipleship. More, he shows kindness by giving us the ability to answer that call, so that we might always be near him and his blessing.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

1 Samuel 3:1-10 – At a time in history when the word of the LORD was rare, the LORD shows kindness to the boy Samuel by calling to him.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 – God called us to faith through the gospel, not because of any merit or worthiness in us, but entirely because of his grace and kindness.

*John 1:43-51 – Jesus proves to Nathanael that he knows absolutely everything about us. In kindness, Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael to follow him.

HYMNS

Opening	633 Speak, O Lord
HOD	375 Arise and Shine in Splendor
Third/Distr	711 Jesus Calls Us o'er the Tumult
Closing	716 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve - v1,4



Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2024

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN

COMMITTED TO A LOFTY CHARGE

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

To whom does the work of salvation belong? Simple question. There is only one Savior. But this is how good Jesus is. So that our lives might have profound meaning and eternal purpose, he shares some of that work with us. He calls us not just to be followers, but to be follower-makers. Jesus asks some—prophets, apostles, pastors, missionaries, teachers—to do this full time. But ultimately Jesus asks all believers to serve as his ambassadors, sharing the gospel with whomever he brings into our sphere of influence. This lofty charge requires commitment—a willingness to abandon everything else should faithfulness require it. This is the life-changing revelation for this week. Jesus has committed us to a lofty charge: the privilege to play a role in his saving work.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Jonah 3:1-5,10 – The reluctant Jonah had been given the lofty charge of proclaiming a message from the LORD to the people of Nineveh.

*2 Corinthians 5:14-21 – Christ has committed to us, as his ambassadors, the message of reconciliation.

Mark 1:14-20 – When Jesus gave Simon and Andrew the lofty charge of fishing for people, they left everything else behind.

HYMNS

Opening	901 O Christians, Haste
HOD	743 I Hear the Savior Calling
Third/Distr	695 Take My Life and Let It Be
Closing	746 I Love to Tell the Story - v1,7,2



Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 28, 2024

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN
ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Authority is the power to determine what happens, the ability to give direction or even commands. Authority is limited. Authority is limited in duration. Parents have authority over their children until they grow up and move out. Authority is limited in scope. A governor has authority over the people of his state only, not the neighboring state. Authority is limited by levels. A manager has authority over employees unless the company owner—a higher authority—demotes him. Authority is limited in duration and scope. It is limited by higher levels of authority.

This week we see that there is one man—only one!—who has absolute authority. There is no one, not even the demons, who is outside his authority. As the Son of God there is no higher authority than Jesus. And his authority is everlasting. But here is the best part of this epiphany: Jesus graciously uses his absolute authority for our benefit and blessing.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 – Moses prophesies that the LORD would raise up another prophet who would speak with all the authority of God himself.

Hebrews 3:1-6 – As great as Moses was, Jesus is worthy of infinitely greater honor. For only Jesus has absolute authority.

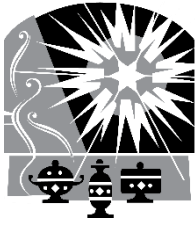
*Mark 1:21-28 – Jesus demonstrates absolute authority. Even his enemies, the demons, have to obey him.

HYMNS

Opening	517 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness
HOD	744 Rise, Shine, You People
Third/Distr	546 Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus
Closing	386 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise - v1,3,5

SERVICE OPTIONS

546 is not a difficult tune, but it is new. Consider having a cantor sing the first verse or two.



Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 4, 2024

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN
THE DEVIL'S WORK UNDONE

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

Martin Luther once said, "Where God built a church, there the devil would also build a chapel." Satan and the other demons hate God. They demonstrate hatred by hurting those that God loves in any way they can. The epiphany Christ wants us to have is this: demons are real, they are plenteous, and they are dangerous. But Christ would also have us see that he is continually undoing the devil's work. More, through his Word, Christ Jesus gives us the power to resist the devil and stand firm in the faith.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

Isaiah 40:27-31 – When the devil's temptations make us tired and accusations make us weary, the LORD promises to renew our strength.

*1 Peter 5:6-11 – Our enemy the devil may stalk us like a hungry lion hunting prey, but the God of all grace cares for us and promises deliverance.

Mark 1:29-39 – The devil loves to see God's children suffer. Jesus undoes the devil's work.

HYMNS

Opening	836 I Walk in Danger All the Way
HOD	850 It Is Well with My Soul
Third/Distr	867 Afflicted Saint, to Christ Draw Near
Closing	924 Abide, O Dearest Jesus

SERVICE OPTIONS

867 is not only new, but it follows a pattern perhaps unfamiliar to our members—where you don't sing the refrain after every verse. It could be introduced by a cantor singing verses 1,2 and the refrain. Then members sing verse 3 followed by the refrain, then verse 4 followed by the refrain.



Last Sunday after Epiphany – Transfiguration of Our Lord February 11, 2024

FROM THE RIVER TO THE MOUNTAIN

A GLIMPSE OF HIS TRUE GLORY

(The Transfiguration of Our Lord)

EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

We began this worship series in the Jordan River. At his baptism, Jesus heard his Father’s glorious voice: “You are my Son, whom I love” (Mark 1:11). From that day, in word and deed, Jesus began to reveal more about himself. He demonstrated the extent of his authority and power and love. Along the way, we had an epiphany. Jesus has to be the very Son of God! Yet, Jesus looked so normal, like an ordinary carpenter or your average rabbi or just another prophet. Until today. We have traveled from the river to the mountain. Today, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus gives us a glimpse of his true glory. As we see him in his dazzling brilliance, the Father speaks again, this time to us: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

This final epiphany prepares us for the journey of Lent where we will witness the most glorious work that Jesus would do when he came down from this mountain.

READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the reading)*

2 Kings 2:1-12a – The prophet Elijah never tasted death but instead was taken directly to heaven. On the Mount of Transfiguration Elijah appeared with the glorious Son of God who would taste death.

2 Corinthians 4:3-6 – We cannot yet physically see what those disciples saw on the Mount of Transfiguration. But St. Paul teaches we can still see the glory of Christ’s light in the gospel.

Mark 9:2-9 – Jesus gives Peter, James, and John a glimpse of his true glory.

RESOURCE REMINDER

Farewell to Alleluia. *Service Builder* contains a wealth of optional resources. To find this rite, “Insert / Rite.” Then search in the drop down at the top left under Seasonal Inserts. The rite is followed by a lengthy Introduction to Holy Week which provides background to pastors (not content for a worship folder). Click on this intro and use the delete dropdown to remove it from the worship folder.

HYMNS

Opening	389 How Good, Lord, to Be Here
HOD	388 Down from the Mount of Glory
Third/Distr	713 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
Closing	522 Beautiful Savior or 884 Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See

(continued)

SERVICE OPTIONS

Service Builder includes a Rite titled "Farewell to Alleluia" that can be utilized after the Blessing in place of the closing hymn. It includes some text and hymn 977, "Alleluia, Song of Triumph." If using this option, consider adding some symbolic action to the hymn. Perhaps it could include making or purchasing a banner with "Alleluia!" printed on it that could be carried out of worship. Schools/ECMs have had children make their own "Alleluia!" banner (as simple as coloring in the word) the week prior. The children bring them forward during the hymn and place them in a decorative box. The children's signs are then used as decoration on Easter morning.