



## Year B (2024) – Sundays after Epiphany (Alternate)

# ***JESUS APPEARS!***

---

### **AN ALTERNATE SERIES**

Over a year before the current Israel/Hamas war, Congregational Services planned an Epiphany worship series with the theme “From the River to the Mountain.” That title references the fact that the worship series focuses on Jesus’ ministry from the time he was baptized in the Jordan to the time he revealed his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Some may consider that series title similar to the slogan “from the river to the sea.”

On the one hand, that series’ title will generally be viewed alongside explanatory text that describes how “the river” and “the mountain” we are talking about are two significant places/events in Jesus’ life, not political boundaries. Moreover, the fact that “the river” being referenced in the series is the same river mentioned in that slogan might provide homiletical opportunity to note that Jesus appeared precisely because this world is broken beyond repair. The ugliness within Israel... the ugliness within our hearts... is why we needed the Christ to come.

On the other hand, we also understand that in some communities “From the River to the Mountain” might simply be too distracting a title, given the similarity to the slogan. Therefore, we are offering a possible alternate series, if you believe that would be beneficial in your context.

In the Season of Epiphany, Year A, we had two series. The first was titled, “Jesus Appears!” This generic theme allows you to reuse the “Jesus Appears!” graphics, videos, and worship folder covers from Year A. Other Year B details previously released—like preaching emphases and hymn selections—remain the same. We are not removing the existing “From the River to the Mountain” resources, but simply providing this alternate thematic plan. You would need to re-download the graphics and video from Year A if you have not saved them. And you will need to download the Year B resources to get hymn selections, Preachers Podcast discussions, etc.

Some items to note:

- We have provided a new Series Explanation and new Themes of the Day.
- We have provided Theme of the Day explanations. In most cases, they are identical to the Year B “From the River to the Mountain” series. In a few cases, there have been minor edits made to better fit the theme of the day for “Jesus Appears!”
- We have provided lesson introductions. Again, most have remained the same from the original series. Some have minor tweaks.
- The Preachers Podcasts have not been edited. So, the speakers will reference the “From the River to the Mountain” theme. Their thoughts on the suggested sermon text obviously remain relevant.

## **SERIES EXPLANATION: JESUS APPEARS!**

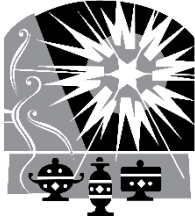
The Gospels tell of a bit of Jesus' life as an infant. Then St. Luke briefly discusses the desire of the boy Jesus to be in the temple. Then Scripture falls silent, telling us nothing about almost two-decades of Jesus' life. For most of Jesus adult life, he lived quietly in Galilee, practicing the carpentry he had learned from his adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus had no followers. Jesus was not famous. But at the exact time God the Father had appointed, Jesus left that obscurity behind. The word epiphany means "appearance." In the Season of Epiphany, we watch Jesus begin his public ministry. Jesus makes his first appearances. And in those appearances, it quickly becomes clear that this is more than a random carpenter's son. As Jesus appears, we see exactly whom he is and what he had come to do. Our worship follows this pattern.

First Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears as Our Substitute</i>
Second Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears through the Ambassadors He Calls</i>
Third Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears Committed to a Lofty Charge</i>
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears as a Prophet with Authority</i>
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears to Undo the Devil's Work</i>
Last Sunday after Epiphany	<i>Jesus Appears as the Son of God in 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.



## ***Jesus Appears as Our Substitute***

***(The Baptism of Our Lord)***

---

### **NOTE**

This year the Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord falls on Saturday, January 6. The plan from The Foundation for the Christmas season included Epiphany as the last Sunday in the Christmas series. Some worship planners may repeat Epiphany on Sunday, January 7 (or observe it only on Sunday). If that is the case, the readings for the Baptism of Our Lord may 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.

### **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 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.



Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 14, 2024

## ***Jesus Appears through the Ambassadors He Calls***

---

### **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 asks us to serve him, not in some menial way, but as his ambassadors. 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.



Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2024

## ***Jesus Appears 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.



Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 28, 2024

## ***Jesus Appears as a Prophet with 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.



Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 4, 2024

## ***Jesus Appears to Undo the Devil's Work***

---

### **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.



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

## ***Jesus Appears as the Son of God in 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, where 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.

### **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.