

Sermon Notes – January 15, 2023
The Holy Gospel of St. John 1: 29-42
Peace Lutheran Church
“The Lamb of God”

On the second Sunday after Epiphany, preachers have a unique opportunity to approach the same story from the prior week (the baptism of Jesus) from another perspective. Rather than a direct account of Jesus’ baptism, we now find John sharing his experience of baptizing Jesus and what he has come to believe of Jesus’ identity.

The theme of testimony - speaking about our experiences of God’s faithfulness - runs steadily throughout all this week’s readings. In Isaiah, Israel shares her experiences of God’s faithfulness of call amid struggle. The psalmist powerfully reflects on the experience of being rescued by God (40: 2) and even laments the inability to share all that God has done and will do for His people (40: 5). Paul writes to the Corinthians about seeing the gifts of God at work among them, including the gift of speech, as the “testimony of Christ has been strengthen among [them]” (1 Cor. 1: 6). Returning to the gospel reading, we see how John’s testimony again becomes curious about Jesus as are invited into their experiences (“Come and see,” John 1: 39). They then share their own testimony with others, like Peter, who in turn enters into relationship with Jesus (1: 40-42).

In our liturgies for baptism and affirmation of baptism, one of the calls of baptism is “to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. Sometimes it seems we lean too heavily on the “deed” part of that call, wanting to distance ourselves from the kind of Christian testimony that makes us uncomfortable. The pendulum swings so far that we neglect to speak about our faith at all. Some might quote that saying attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” And yes, sometimes words are indeed necessary! After all, “How are they to believe in one whom they have never heard?” (Rom. 10: 14).

Perhaps this could be an opportunity to lead people in reflection on God’s activity in our lives and in the life of the congregation. Can you name ways God has been faithful to our community in the past? Where is God showing up right now? Can we practice sharing these stories within and outside our community?

I'm reminded of the poster that shows up in airports, train stations, and bus depots: "See something? Say something!" While this catchphrase is about keeping an eye out for suspicious objects, perhaps it could be framed as a way to think about God's call for us to testify. When we see the Holy Spirit at work, we follow in the footsteps of the people of Israel, the psalmist, John the Baptist, and Andrew by saying something. After all, by God's grace we have come to know the Messiah, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). Why would we keep that good news to ourselves?