

Year A – Second Sunday after Epiphany– January 18, 2026

Pastor Megan Floyd

Isaiah 49:1-7

John 1:29-42

Grace and peace to you from God and the Holy Spirit, and from Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, whose light and love we follow. Amen.

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Look here! Here is the Lamb of God!

We hear this story now... today... in the season of Epiphany because Epiphany is a time to illuminate God's revelation to us through Jesus.

And God is being revealed to us... here... and now... as God was revealed to John the Baptist when he saw Jesus rise from the waters of baptism.

John the Baptist, who heard the voice of God tell him to watch for the one on whom the Holy Spirit would descend as a dove... that he would be the one who baptizes with fire and the Holy Spirit... watch for this one... he is the Son of God.

Behold... the Lamb of God who has come to lift away the barriers between you and God... Behold... the Lamb of God who has come to stand between you and evil... Behold... the Lamb of God who has come to liberate you from the sin of the world.

Yes! Behold... Jesus has come to liberate the oppressed... to free them from the sin of the world that has held them in shackles...

Behold... Jesus has come to liberate the hungry... to free them from the sin of systems that uphold inequality and imprison people in their poverty.

Behold... Jesus has come to liberate those who are wounded and hurting... to free them from the violence that harms.

Behold... Jesus has come to liberate us from our brokenness... to bring healing to our hearts and to our land... to rebuild the nations and bring peace.

Behold! God is revealed to you... through this man, Jesus, who has come to liberate you from your sin and from the sin of the world... so come and see... follow him... and abide with him.

How does it feel in your body... in your heart... to hear this call from John to behold Jesus... and to hear the call from Jesus to come and see... to follow... to abide with him?

How must it have felt for those who were there... those being crushed by Empire... trapped in poverty... bound to systems of discrimination and oppression.

To hear this good news as one who is being crushed... it's a lifeline... a ray of hope and a cause for rejoicing! Yes, I do want to come and see... I do want to follow... and I do want to abide with Christ!

And yet, when we look out at the world today... I sometimes wonder how much has really changed. Jesus calls us to join him in the mission and ministry of liberation, but ...Lord, there is still so much suffering.

It's not lost on me that we hear this call to us... this call to join in the work of liberation... on the eve of Martin Luther King Day... a disciple of Jesus and a prophet who gave his life for the work of liberation.

Like all prophets, Martin Luther King held up a mirror to his country... he showed us the sin of our society and challenged us to confess... to repent... to change our hearts and minds... and to rejoin Jesus in the work of liberation from the oppression of our sin.

Martin Luther King held up that mirror... and he was killed for it.

He was killed because facing our sin is painful... and liberating the oppressed means disrupting systems of wealth and power and privilege... it means disrupting systems of Empire.

...and when you strike at the Empire, the Empire strikes back.

Jesus calls us to come and see, but what we find might make us uncomfortable. And in the face of discomfort, far too many run and hide.

In the face of discomfort, they turn away from the liberating message of Jesus... they focus solely on the individual salvation they hope to receive, and they challenge the prophets and preachers that hold up those mirrors.

Unable to sit in the discomfort of the good news of the Gospel's liberating message for the poor and oppressed, they turn away, and they cry out that politics has no place in the pulpit!

...as if it were truly possible to separate Jesus' call to welcome the stranger and love your neighbor... from the salvation that comes from abiding in and with Christ.

You cannot... you cannot abide with Christ... while ignoring what he came to do, and how he calls to us to join him.

Truly following and abiding with Jesus... true discipleship leads to liberation for ourselves and others... but it does not always lead to comfort and material blessings.

It cannot... because truly following Jesus and abiding in him means standing with him in his mission and disrupting systems of sin.

Behold! The Lamb of God who has come to take away the sin of the world! ...but my friends, Jesus didn't come to wave a magic wand.

No, in fact... Jesus came preaching this good news and calling us to join him.

Jesus came to invite us into God's grand mission of love... for loving others is the only path toward liberation *for us all* from our sin. This is the path on which we follow Jesus.

Dr. King preached this for us when he said... "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate... only love can do that."

To abide in Jesus... is to abide in love.

Every generation has these crisis moments...moments when our sin against others... our sin against our neighbors... is illuminated to a point where it can no longer be ignored.

These are moments when it becomes so blindingly clear that the harm being done to the least among us... the harm perpetuated against the very people Jesus called us to love and care for... is also causing incredible harm to our entire society.

Our sin is harming everyone around... and it is this kind of sin of hatred and fear and abuse that holds us apart from God ...apart from our Creator who loves us beyond measure.

I do believe we are living in our crisis moment right now.

Witnessing the terror and the atrocities being committed is enough to drive good people into despair. ...but we must not despair.

We must not despair because God is still being revealed to us through Jesus, and Jesus is still calling us to abide in his love... to disrupt systems that perpetuate sin and to show up for those in need wherever we can, and however we can.

Showing up... won't look the same for everyone... and that is good and right, because God calls us all, across the full diversity of Creation... to show love in as many different ways as there are people.

And Jesus does not call us for our sake alone... Jesus calls us to abide in his love for the sake of others... and ultimately for the sake of creation. If we focus only on ourselves, we miss the point.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God says, *"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

God's liberation... is like ripples of water on a pond... expanding outward beyond ourselves... reaching to the ends of the earth.

And God is faithful and true and will not abandon Jesus' mission of abiding love.

So behold, the Lamb of God, who comes to take away the sin of the world... to lift away the barrier that keeps us apart from God, and invites us into abiding love.

But also... hear this now... this is important... your salvation does not depend on you getting this right. We will all mess it up... none of us are perfect, and God knows it.

However, you are already claimed, redeemed, and beloved by Christ, in all the messy ways we do life.

Jesus knows you fully... knows all of your joys and sorrows... all of your virtues and your flaws... and loves you as you are... and still calls you... *as you are* to join him in his mission of love and liberation.

However, faith and discipleship are not meant to be passive... because the joy of this life of discipleship is found in seeing how the way of Christ brings light to the world and heals others through love.

The way of Christ has the power to transform the darkest corners and flood them with light and love... so we cannot keep this way of Christ to ourselves.

This is the good news... it must be shared, especially... in times of such darkness. We need Christ's light for the sake of the world.

We need disciples who respond to hate and fear by drawing on the strength and love of Christ, and flood the darkness with light and love. That is the only way forward for us. This is the way of Jesus.

We don't join with Christ to earn our salvation or become worthy of God's love... but we answer Jesus' call to abide with him... *because we are already loved.*

And because we are already loved, we can look upon our neighbor with love... and we can see clearly that our liberation is bound up with theirs... and *only together* can we work to break the chains that bind, and set the captives free.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, calls us in love to come and see... come and see this work of liberation... come and see how our lives are connected to all others... come and see... and follow... and then abide with him in his love... for the sake of the whole world.

Amen.