

Morning Worship for Epiphany 2

Preparation

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

**Loving Lord,
fill us with your life-giving,
joy-giving, peace-giving presence,
that we may praise you now with our lips
and all the day long with our lives,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

The grace of God has dawned upon the world through
our Saviour Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for us to purify
a people as his own.

Let us confess our sins.

**Lord God,
we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.
We are sorry and repent.
Have mercy on us according to your love.
Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.
Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse you from your sins,
and restore you in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

The Benedictus (The Song of Zechariah)

**Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,
who has come to his people and set them free.**

**He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.**

**Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
To show mercy to our ancestors,
and to remember his holy covenant.**

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:

**to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.**

**And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,**

**To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.**

**In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in
the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen. (Luke 1.68–79)**

The word of God

A reading from the first book of Samuel

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

This is the word of the Lord; **thanks be to God** (1 Samuel 3:1-10)

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

This is the Gospel of the Lord; **Praise to you O Christ**

(John 1:43-end)

A reflection by Rev'd Stephen Burge

This morning's readings have all been about being *called*, but also about how different people have responded to that calling: Samuel doesn't immediately understand what is happening when God calls out to him, Philip on the other hand drops everything and follows Jesus straight away, and then there is Nathaniel who is very dubious when he is called by his friend Philip, but he is then swayed by Jesus when he meets him. It is important to remember that we all respond to God's call in different ways. What I would like to explore this morning is Nathaniel's response to his encounter with Jesus. He says, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49). In these few words Nathaniel describes the different roles and titles of Jesus. Jesus is called a rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel.

The title *Rabbi* is one that is mentioned frequently in the Gospels, often appearing at significant moments. The most significant, perhaps, is when Mary Magdalene calls out "Rabbi!" when she finally realizes who the man she has met in the garden really is. When we hear the word Rabbi we can often think that it means something equivalent to a parish priest – the Rabbi of a synagogue is the figure that leads a local Jewish community in worship, preaches from the pulpit, and looks after the spiritual needs of the community. But being a Rabbi is fundamentally about learning and scholarship, it is used to describe someone who has studied the Jewish scriptures and is knowledgeable about the sources of Jewish law. When people in the Bible call Jesus Rabbi, they are referring to the Rabbi's status as a learned figure in the community, and their role as a teacher; someone who helps lead people to God, to open up the scriptures, and to interpret the Law. On our own religious journeys, we all need teachers and guides to help us along the way. We need people who will challenge us, and make us think about whether we are doing the right things, people to help us to navigate difficult moments in our spiritual lives. And these last few months have certainly been difficult! We should never think that seeking help is a sign of weakness – indeed, we need only to turn to our Bibles to see how important spiritual guides and teachers are. Samuel would never have understood what his calling was, had it not been for the elderly and righteous Eli to help guide him along the way, and the disciples would have never understood the importance of Jesus's message of live without Jesus walking that journey with them. But Jesus's teaching did not end with his time on earth, he speaks to us now through his own words, preserved for us in the Gospels.

The second title that Nathaniel uses is “Son of God”, a title revealing and proclaiming Jesus’s divine nature. The teaching and messages of Jesus are those of God, of the divine. The season of Epiphany is the time when we remember the ways in which Jesus’s true nature was manifested in the world. When we remember the visit of the Magi when they came and acknowledged Jesus as a son of God, symbolized with their gift of frankincense. We remember when Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit rested upon him. We remember, as we will next Sunday, Jesus’s miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And today, we remember Nathaniel’s declaration that Jesus is the Son of God. In his encounter with Nathaniel, Jesus reveals to Nathaniel that he not an ordinary person, since he knew that Nathaniel had been sitting by the fig tree. The start of Jesus’s ministry sees a rapid succession of moments where he is not just a teacher, wiseman, or scholar, but he is shown to be something more than that – to be the *Son of God*, God made man, coming to teach us in person.

The final title that Nathaniel gives Jesus is “King of Israel”. This, of course, associates Jesus with his forefather, the prophet David. Perhaps more importantly, this title roots Jesus in our own world – it roots Jesus in the world of kings and princes, of government, of bureaucrats and worldly power. As someone who is fully human, Jesus understands what it means to be *us*, how it feels to laugh and to cry, what means to love and to grieve. Apart from a very small episode in Luke’s Gospel, where Jesus gets lost in the Temple aged twelve, we know nothing about Jesus’s life until his ministry. But during these years, Jesus experienced all the things that we experience: having a fun day out with his friends, being bored at school; how it felt to lose a parent and experience the joy of a new birth within the community; he would have experienced anger, joy, frustration, fear, anxiety, annoyance, boredom, and contentment and all the emotions we experience. Our emotions makes us who we are. For me, there is something incredibly moving to think that Jesus knows what it feels like to be human, and I am convinced that that is one of the reasons why Jesus’s teaching was so effective and so powerful. Although he is the Son of God, he is also one of us.

When we hear God calling us, we will respond in as many different ways as we are people. Some of us might try to run away, like the prophet Jonah; some of us, like Samuel, will need help and direction along the way; some of us, like Philip may respond with an immediate “yes”; and some of us, like Nathaniel, may need a bit of convincing. But however it is that we respond to Jesus’s call, we do so acknowledging that Jesus is our Rabbi, our

teacher; that Jesus is the Son of God; and that Jesus is the King of Israel, rooted in the earthly world with us. In Jesus we find our guide and we find our God, but our God is one who understands what being human really means. So whenever we call out to God with our thanks for something good that has happened in our lives, or when we cry out in panic or in fear, or in anxiety; or when we cry out because we are hurting and in sorrow – God understands how we are feeling and shares in feelings with us; God will then guide us to the place that we need to be. I pray that all of us, like Nathaniel, may proudly proclaim Jesus as our Rabbi, the Son of God, and King of Israel, knowing in our hearts what that all means. Amen.

Our faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who made all things?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?
We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God?
We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers led by Chriss Hewitt

Thank you, Lord, for rest and safety through the hours of night, help us to rest in your loving embrace drawing on your love and strength during these testing times.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Thank you for all people in all walks of life doing what they can to help the sick, lonely and vulnerable throughout the year and especially at this time. Wrap them in your loving embrace and help them to continue.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Thank you to those who have heard you calling and are working in the way you had planned for them. Help them to grow in love and faith and to bring your word of peace, reconciliation and love to all they have contact with

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all clergy and especially Joy, Stephen and Gordon that you would uphold them in all they do in service of you. We also pray for Angela and Catherine, the PCC and all those behind the scenes working for the good of the church especially during these ever-changing times.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all those suffering in Mind, Body and Spirit and all displaced people and homeless people who need help, compassion and love. Help us to remember them in our prayers this coming week.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Thank you, Lord, that you see us as we are and love us even when we face things in ourselves, we are not at peace with. We ask for a fresh touch of your Holy Spirit to revive and refresh us and to see ourselves as you see us.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Let us take a few moments of silence to lift before the Lord those known to us who are sick or in need

(Silence held)

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ recently and for their family and friends

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Merciful Father, **Accept these prayers For the sake of your Son Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Conclusion

Collect for the day

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.

To you be glory and praise for ever.

From the rising of the sun to its setting
your name is proclaimed in all the world.

To you be glory and praise for ever.

When the time had fully come
you sent the Sun of Righteousness.

In him the fullness of your glory dwells.

To you be glory and praise for ever.

We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*If you would like us to pray for you during this time of stress and anxiety,
please leave a prayer request on the website email address or contact Joy
(vicar@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk)*

Reverend Joy Cousans
Reverend Stephen Burge

