

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
Year A: Epiphany 2
Global Liturgy with music
Make Known Incarnate n' Divine (Be Kind)

John 1:29-42

²⁹[John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!³⁰This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ³¹I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³²And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

³⁵The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). ⁴²He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas” (which is translated Peter).

John knows when it is his job to step to the sidelines and allow Jesus’ ministry to grow and flourish. He also knows his full job is to tell of Jesus, who is greater than himself. This is our job. To glorify God with all we say and do. We don’t like the language of testimony as Lutheran’s, but people remember our faith stories. Our job is to make Jesus’ known!

Upon first hearing you might think that we have a repeat of last week's text. Lutherans are as we know, both and people, so the answer is yes and no! Last week we heard the baptism story of Jesus out of Matthew's gospel. Which is where we get the description of John the Baptist most of us commonly remember. John has long tangled hair, camels clothing, ate locusts and bugs, enjoys ranting at religious

leaders. But in John's gospel, there is no description of John the Baptist. In fact, it doesn't even explicitly say that he baptized Jesus! He only saw the spirit descending upon Jesus – when John did the baptism. That is the moment God revealed to John that Jesus was Messiah. Twice in the text, John indicates that he “himself did not know Jesus.”

John indicates that the only way he knows the Lord, is by the Holy Spirit's disclosure. ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ John had to lean on God's revealing to realize this man was the Son of God. Then, after that realization, John basically says, “I did see. So I did my job! I told everyone this is Jesus, God's Son.” John is very clear about his role in Jesus' life. His only calling is to point to the Son of God. To make Jesus known in every way possible; even paying with his own life.

Now, the NRSV uses the word testimony. John gave his own testimony about Jesus. We Lutherans don't use the word testimony very much. There are lots of jokes about why we don't, which I won't repeat because it's not good to make fun of ourselves about something as important as this.

But I will remind us that we are the ELCA Lutherans. Not the evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

“With this historical link between tradition and the term “evangelical,” there has been some anguish and hand-wringing as the conservative evangelical movement over the last 50 years has led to associations with the word that many North American Lutherans find negative: legalistic theology; a literal interpretation of Scripture; perceived hostility toward the LGBTQ community;” ...and more.

Richard Webb, a pastor of Lutheran Church of Hope, West Des Moines, Iowa, and a former member of the ELCA churchwide evangelism team says this.

“We may want to figure ways to [recontextualize] the word,” he said. “We talk about ourselves as ‘good news people,’ as ‘gospel people,’ but the best way to reclaim that word is to literally live that way. What kind of news are we to the people around us? Are we bad news? Are we boring news? Or are we startlingly good news?” (<https://www.livinglutheran.org/mission-ministry/the-word/#:~:text=With%20this%20historical%20link%20between,marriage%20that%20many%20find%20oppressive.>)

I don't know about you – but I have plenty of faith stories of good, exciting, mysterious, only divine news to share about God almighty. I know you do too, because we have shared them together.

Every time we share a story like that, we might not frame it this way, but in essence we're saying to others, 'my life isn't all about me. It's about God and what God is up to.' That was John's message. He would say, "My life is all about Jesus!"

Which reminded me of another of John the Baptist's sayings. A couple chapters later, he says this about his relationship to Jesus.

"He must increase and I must decrease." As Jesus' ministry grew, John knew that was a blessing. John was doing his job to point people to Christ. The Message Bible reads John 3:30 this way: (That's why my cup is running over.) **This is the assigned moment for him to move into the center, while I slip off to the sidelines.**

This afternoon (yesterday) Broncos kicker, Will Lutz, converted a 28-yard field goal to score against the Bills in the second quarter. Bo Nix mishandled the snap on a prior play. But another player actually held the ball for Lutz' kick. Bo knew his job and when to step away...to the sidelines.

What if we – you and I became increasingly aware of when we allow Jesus to take center stage and when we move to the sidelines? What if we became increasingly aware that our only true job in life is to point to Jesus?

There is so much going on in our culture and the world right now. Would you agree? Our way to point to Jesus is to be KIND. Know Incarnate and Divine. WE know the incarnate Jesus. Then we make Jesus Known as the Incarnate and Divine one.

In just a moment the 2026 Leadership Team will be installed. Holy Spirit plan with Kathy Cisar. Give them to each one of you. Enjoy it yourself or use it to point to Jesus. "I got this at church as a reminder to be Kind as Jesus was kind."

Know Incarnate n Divine

Amen