

Epiphany 2016 Scripture and Message Synopses

“WORD OF GOD SPEAK”

How do we listen to God? How do we discern God’s voice? Whether it’s in our personal decision-making or seeking to follow God’s will as the church, we have to pay attention. In the Gospel of John, we read that “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” Jesus is the Word of God, but sometimes it’s tough for us to listen to him and learn from him.

Epiphany is a holy day celebrated on January 6 each year (the twelfth day of Christmas). It’s the celebration of the magi coming to worship Jesus and the acknowledgment that Jesus came for all people. But “epiphany” has come to be known as a moment in our lives when we understand in new way or see something differently. We’ll focus on Jesus as the Word of God whose life and ministry speaks to us. We’ll explore the “a-ha!” moments in Jesus’ life and ministry and how those moments connect to our own “a-ha!” moments.

General discussion:

- *Music:* Use Mercy Me’s “Word of God Speak” as a theme song for the series. The lyrics are:

I'm finding myself at a loss for words	Please let me stay and rest
And the funny thing is it's okay	In Your holiness
The last thing I need is to be heard	Word of God speak
But to hear what You would say	I'm finding myself in the midst of You
Word of God speak	Beyond the music, beyond the noise
Would You pour down like rain	All that I need is to be with You
Washing my eyes to see	And in the quiet hear Your voice
Your majesty	I'm finding myself at a loss for words
To be still and know	And the funny thing is it's okay
That You're in this place	
- *Visuals:* WORD OF GOD SPEAK attached to the pallets on the ledge.
- *Introductory media possibilities;*
 - “Are You Listening?” Length: 3:08. Cost: \$19.98. We serve an active God who does speak in this day and age. This video takes verses from God’s Word and presents the ideas and concepts within the verses in a modern conversational manner.
<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/20465/are-you-listening>.
 - “Study.” Length: 3:31. Cost: \$14.98. What if God wrote us a letter about how we read His Bible? What would it sound like? Spoken word poet, David Bowden, attempts to send us a message from the writer of the Bible about His book.
<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/46442/study>.
 - “God Speaks.” Length: 1:51. Cost: \$17.98. We often wonder if God is speaking to us. But perhaps a more appropriate question would be, “Are we listening?”
<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/11634/god-speaks>.

January 10, 2016: “God Speaks in Baptism”

Baptism of the Lord

Scripture: Luke 3: 15-18, 21-23? (New Living Translation)

¹⁵Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah.

¹⁶John answered their questions by saying, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” ¹⁷He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.” ¹⁸John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

²¹One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

The Ancestors of Jesus

²³Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

Synopsis: When Jesus is baptized, it represents his call to ministry. He is called a beloved son of God, and the Holy Spirit comes upon him. Baptism is one of our “a-ha!” moments, too, when we’re called to ministry - named and claimed by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Visuals: Water, Dove,

Media: Baptism episode 25 from “Jane the Virgin”

(<http://www.buzzfeed.com/alannabennett/cry-with-me#.sBrQkwKY>) in which the family reads a letter that has been passed down through the generations.

“My precious child, these are the things I hope for you and your life:

may you be bold, may you be brave, may you be loving and joyful and kind.

May you carry with you the vitality and spirit of the generations before you.

Whatever you dream for your life, may you summon the strength to follow that dream.

Always let your faith be greater than your fear.

May you never forget, through all of life’s great adventures, through every moment of every day, that I walk beside you, cheering you on.

Hoping for you. Praying for you. Loving you.

And may you one day love your own child as deeply as I love you. Today and always.”

Activity: Sacrament of Holy Baptism and/or Congregational Reaffirmation of Holy Baptism

Music: Spirit of God (FWS 2117), Wade in the Water (FWS 2107)

January 17, 2016: “God Speaks in Miracles”

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: John 2: 1-12 (The Message)

¹Three days later there was a wedding in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there.

²Jesus and his disciples were guests also. ³When they started running low on wine at the wedding banquet, Jesus’ mother told him, “They’re just about out of wine.”

⁴Jesus said, “Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn’t my time. Don’t push me.”

⁵She went ahead anyway, telling the servants, “Whatever he tells you, do it.”

⁶Six stoneware water pots were there, used by the Jews for ritual washings. Each held twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus ordered the servants, “Fill the pots with water.” And they filled them to the brim.

⁸“Now fill your pitchers and take them to the host,” Jesus said, and they did.

⁹When the host tasted the water that had become wine (he didn't know what had just happened but the servants, of course, knew), he called out to the bridegroom, ¹⁰"Everybody I know begins with their finest wines and after the guests have had their fill brings in the cheap stuff. But you've saved the best till now!"

¹¹This act in Cana of Galilee was the first sign Jesus gave, the first glimpse of his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹²After this he went down to Capernaum along with his mother, brothers, and disciples, and stayed several days.

Synopsis: To claim that "miracles happen" is sometimes viewed suspiciously, but miracles were a part of Jesus' ministry. Signs and wonders were a way by which people came to know that God's power was real and for all people. How can we reclaim God's power to do what we don't think can be done, bring hope and joy, and help us to put our trust in him?

Visuals: Water, Water jars, Wedding

Media possibilities:

- "Water to Wine." Length: 0:22. Cost: \$15.00. Need a little biblical motivation? Consider what Jesus did with a common item and what he can do for you. <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/16038/water-to-wine>.
- "Miracles." Length: 1:08. Cost: \$19.99. We serve a mighty and powerful God who had done the miraculous through history. What about now? <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/60367/miracles>.
- "The First Miraculous Sign." Length: 2:14. Cost: We own it. Last used on 1/20/13. At the request of His mother, Jesus performs His first miracle at a wedding in Cana when He turns water into wine. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUVVqHBZXto>.
- "Mary Expecting Again." Length: 6:00. Cost: \$15.00. Come and meet Mary, mother of Jesus as she witnessed Jesus' first miracle. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/23331/mary-expecting-again>.

Activity: Turn water into "wine" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ou0Jy9jmq5k>.

Music: Trust and Obey (UMH 467), Our God (contemporary)

Human Relations Day (special offering)

January 24, 2016: "God Speaks through the Prophets" 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Luke 4: 14-21 (New International Version)

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

¹⁵He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Synopsis: When Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and says that the words from long ago are true right now, it's good news! His message to the people then and to us now is that we are called to be a part of this good news - both as recipients and as active participants in the Kingdom of God.

Visuals: Images of those we come to mind when we read Luke 4: 18-19 (who are the poor, prisoners, blind, oppressed?)

Media possibility: "I Am." Length: 0:49. Cost: \$15.00. Teacher. Prophet. Son of God. Jesus has been referred to by many names. Who do you say He is?

<http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/10299/i-am>.

Activity:

Music: We Are Called (FWS 2172), The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve (2241), O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing (contemporary version in WS 3001)

January 31, 2016: "God Speaks Hard Words to Hear" 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Luke 4: 21-30 (New International Version)

²¹And he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

²³Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

²⁴"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Synopsis: The good news that Jesus shared was good, but only until he challenged our notions of who can receive the good news. When he pushes us beyond our comfort zones and tells us that even those we want to leave out are a part of his ministry, then we get angry and don't want to hear it. In light of the struggles around different social issues, how do we hear Jesus today? What are the hardest words he speaks to us?

Visuals:

Media possibilities:

- "Encounters – Hometown Boy." Length: 2:33. Cost: \$14.98. A prophet has no honor in his hometown. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/19342/encounters--hometown-boy>.
- "I Have a Confession to Make." Length: 3:59. Cost: \$14.98. People often view the church as unaccepting and judgmental. The problem is not standing against sin, it is refusing to confess our own sin. Let the church speak its own sin and we will overcome it along with our stereotypes. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/46439/i-have-a-confession-to-make>.

Activity: Prayer of confession.

Music: We Are Called (FWS 2172), Dear Jesus, in Whose Life I See (UMH 468), Lord of the Dance (UMH 261), Jesus Paid It All - in WS 3100

February 7, 2016: “God Says, ‘Listen!’”

Transfiguration of the Lord

Scripture: Luke 9: 28-36 (New International Version)

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

²⁹As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰Two men, Moses and Elijah, ³¹appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³²Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

³⁴While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” ³⁶When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

Synopsis: What happens on the mountain when Jesus is transfigured isn’t something that’s easily described. The disciples see Jesus face-to-face in a new way after he’s told them what’s ahead for him. The call is to listen to all that Jesus says and does - and follow him. We have “a-ha!” moments when we experience Jesus in a new and powerful way and times when we understand more clearly what it truly means to follow Jesus.

Visuals:

Media possibility: “Transfiguration.” Length: 1:43. Cost: We own it. Last used ??? Visual liturgy. <http://www.worshiphousemedia.com/mini-movies/8029/transfiguration>.

Activity: Holy Communion, Super Bowl Sunday, Souper Bowl of Caring

Music: We Have Come at Christ’s Own Bidding (FWS 2103), How Great is Our God (WS 3003), In Christ Alone (WS 3105), Holy Ground (FWS 2272), Be Thou My Vision (UMH 451)