

Christ Episcopal Church

2 Emerson Road

East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855

The Second Sunday

after the Epiphany (A)

January 19, 2020

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

DRAFT

“Sharing God’s Love”

The Holy Gospel according to

John 1:29-42

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.’ I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness, “I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked at Jesus

as he walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him, and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Dear Lord, help us recall the moments you have visited us. Amen.

[By Dr. Jeffrey K. London, Pastor and Head of Staff at John Knox Presbyterian Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma.]

“A pile of rocks ceases to be a pile of rocks when someone has a cathedral in mind.”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupery, as quoted by Donna Schaper in “These Days,”

September-October, 1999, Volume 30 – No. 5, Tuesday, September 21.)

<https://sermonwriter.com/sermons/new-testament-john-135-51-come-and-see-london/>

“When you look in the mirror what do you see?

“What do you see when you look around this sanctuary at all of these people? Go on look at them! Have you ever really looked at the faces of those sit in front of you or behind you or on the far left side or the far right side?

“What do you see when you look out at the world through the newspapers you read and the television you watch?

“Do you see a world filled with piles and piles of rocks or do you see cathedrals?



Rev. London continued: “I catch myself doing this whenever I go to the social, political, and economic center of a city. I am of course speaking of my local drugstore. There I move my cart up and down the aisle as I size up the other folks who pass me by. I find I do this without even thinking about it. I look at someone and I pass judgement. I’ve discovered I base my judgements on

such highly important things like outward appearance, number of screaming children, and of course, the all important – what’s in the shopping cart! I can’t help it, I look to see what other’s think are the necessities of life. I realize it’s probably an invasion of privacy, but I used to think you could tell a lot about a person by what’s in their shopping cart. That is until I realized that I am mostly critical of what others have put in their cart. “I wouldn’t purchase brussel sprouts if you paid me,” I think to myself as I pass by an older woman. “How can he eat all that junk,” I murmur as I pass by a the

guy with a cart full of soda, chips, Twinkies and Old Milwaukee.

Rev. London goes on to say:

“Now I don’t think I’m the only one who does this. I think that if we’re honest, we can all admit to not really seeing the people who pass us by on a daily basis because we’re too busy sizing them up and looking at “what’s in their cart.” We pass judgement on others based on appearance, skin color, clothing, age, etc. We make snap judgements based on some of the most insignificant aspects of life. And most of the time these snap judgements are crass, critical, and negative.

“The truth be told, the way we view those around us, and the world at large, says more about our own self-image than anything else. It’s no big secret to say that if I’m angry and frustrated all the time and tend to treat others harshly, I probably don’t think too much of myself.

Negativism and judgmentalism have a hold on us today like never before. Our eyes have become dim to the God-given goodness others possess, to the God-given goodness we ourselves possess, all because we refuse to see the cathedral for the rocks.

“Well, having said that, now is probably a good time for some Good News. The first

bit of Good News we can walk away with today has to do not with how we see, but with how we are seen. When Jesus calls Simon to be a disciple, he gives him a new name in the process. “You are to be called ‘Cephas/Rocky’!” ... and the music begins. Jesus didn’t see a fisherman, he saw a Rock, he saw a cornerstone, he saw great potential.



“Over and over again, Jesus sees within people what the world does not see. He sees the good, he sees the potential, and he calls it out. In some ways, we could say that the whole of Jesus’ ministry is the calling forth of the God-given potential that lies within.

“I believe the same is true for us today. When God looks at us he doesn’t see a pile of rocks, he sees a cathedral. I believe God sees the good within us first. I believe God sees the potential for greatness that lies within us individually and as a congregation. I believe that God sacrificed his only Son to proclaim to us our immeasurable value. Our value is not something that can be gained or measured by our economic earning power, or by the clothes we wear, or by physical appearance, or by SAT scores. To say, as Paul does, that we were bought with a price is to say that our value comes from outside ourselves, it comes from God (1 Cor. 6:20).

The fact that we are now priceless in the eyes of God is not because we have made it so, or even because Mom told us so, but because God has made it so through the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ.

“When you look in the mirror do you see someone worth dying for?”

“When you look around this sanctuary or out into the world do you see people worth dying for?”

“Well, that’s how God sees us. Our true value is immeasurable. Our true potential unfathomable.

“It’s not about simple optimism or freedom from all critical judgements, it’s

about holy eyesight, it's about a whole new way of life.

“To live with holy eyesight is to have the eyes of Christ.

“It is to first see ourselves as priceless creations endowed with goodness and called to a holy vocation; and then to see our neighbors in the same way.

“God's invitation in Christ is to see ourselves and our neighbors as God does: first, as valuable and priceless, not as rocks, but as cathedrals in process.

“When Jesus first laid eyes on his would-be disciples he didn't see a pile of rocks, he

saw the beginnings of a cathedral, a church. Jesus looked at the likes of Andrew and Simon and saw great potential, great God-given potential. He didn't see rocks, he saw diamonds in the rough. Jesus didn't see a bunch of uneducated, salty, low-income fishermen, he didn't focus on the 'what appeared to be,' he saw the 'what could be.'”

John the Baptist points Jesus out to the crowd, and some of John's followers started to follow Jesus. What is wonderful about

this moment frozen in time is that it is a brief moment when we feel we are actually personally with the disciples.

It was a wonderful moment in history. This was a moment that the writer of John never forgot because either he was there or someone gave him a first-person account of what happened.

It was a wonderful moment in time. This appears to be a first-person historical account of a very brief moment in history that changed the whole world. At Four O'clock in the afternoon John the Baptist sends Jesus two of his disciples. Then there is the moment when Simon Peter and

Andrew met Jesus. Everyone was looking for the Messiah. John was telling everyone that it was around the corner, and then suddenly there was Jesus.

Many small moments have changed history. For instance David Blair, the second officer on the Titanic, locked away all the binoculars. Another instance where small things mattered is that Field Marshal Rommel of Germany went on vacation a few days before D-day.

The Watergate Scandal started because of the moment someone noticed duct tape keeping a door open.

Hitler was rejected by the Academy of Fine Arts of Vienna two times, two moments, and failed to become an artist, but instead became a political figure.

(<http://mentalfloss.com/article/60423/26-little-things-changed-history-forever>)

In September 1862, during the Confederate invasion of Maryland, General Robert E. Lee drafted Special Order 191, outlining the moves his Army should make in preparation for the Battle of Antietam. A copy of the order ended up in the careless hands of Maj. Gen. D.H. Hill, who forgetfully left the note in a box on the

ground, wrapped around three cigars. Union troops found the order, read the plans, and fended off the South in the bloodiest battle—and a turning point—of the Civil War.

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr., approached the podium near the Lincoln Memorial with something he didn't normally need: notes for his speech. Sensing the importance of the moment, King had stayed up late the night before perfecting what he would say. But as he delivered it, he came to a line that wasn't quite right. Off to the side, the singer Mahalia Jackson shouted, "Tell them about

the dream, Martin!” “Tell them about the dream!” King paused, looked out over the crowd, and went off-script, saying, “I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.” The rest of the speech stayed on that theme, and “I have a dream” went down in history as one of the most memorable phrases ever delivered.

[\(http://www.rd.com/culture/split-second-decisions-history/\)](http://www.rd.com/culture/split-second-decisions-history/)

[Thanks to LektionAid.com for the stories.]

Do you have a dream? Is it a dream which will make the world more loving and

just? Will the poor hear the good news preached? Will the blind receive their sight, and the deaf hear? What kind of dream did God give you? And how can that dream bring in the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, as we pray every Sunday and daily?

James Moore in his book, “God Was Here, and I Was Out to Lunch” tells about a meeting that Dr. William B. McClain, professor of preaching and worship at Wesley Theological Seminary, once had with a South Korean tailor in Seoul, Korea. Amazingly, this tailor introduced himself as

“Smitty Lee.” Dr. McClain was fascinated to discover a Korean named Smitty, and he asked whether the name Smitty was a Korean name. The Korean tailor said no, and then he told the story of how his life had been saved some years ago, during the Korean War by a courageous American soldier from Virginia, who was called Smitty Ransom. The tailor went on to explain a rather familiar custom in that Asian culture, summing it up in two simple sentences: “He saved my life. I took his name.” Isn’t that what we do as Christians, Jesus saved our life and we have taken his name, ‘Christ-ians’, little Christ’s.

<https://sermonwriter.com/sermons/new-testament-john-129-42-come-and-see-strayhorn/>

John the Baptist's comment about Jesus, that Jesus is the one "who takes away the sin of the world" is likely translated from the original Aramaic, the language which both Jesus and John probably actually spoke. One literal translation of the New Testament Greek of what John said to his disciples, which we have just heard as the one "who takes away the sin of the world", a very literal translation of the Greek calls Jesus, "the One lifting the missing of the system,"

“the One lifting the missing of the system,”
which has a more modern sound to our ears.
How many are ‘missing in the system’? <>

John’s prophetic words extend directly
into the depths of those who still do not
know the love and care of God in our world.
How can we be a part of the solution rather
than a part of the problem? To whom in our
community are we still not touching with the
Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ, and
how can we reach them? One way that can
be put into effect is to do a ‘walk-around’ of
our neighborhoods. Who do we see that
never darken the doors of a church, or who
are somehow exclude from our Christian

programs and activities? These become the ‘fish’ for whom we are to learn how to be fishermen, as Jesus taught his disciples.

What church programs are working, what are not? We need to take an inventory of what we do in a parish and ask the loving but sometimes challenging questions. What are we doing right, and how can we improve or innovate?

One of the parishes where I supply has a very popular Christian preschool which they advertise as a (quote) “Christian preschool.” The Methodist Church a short distance from them also has a preschool, but the Methodists say their Methodist preschool is

not a “Christian” preschool. Yet there is a healthy ‘waiting list’ for the Episcopal Christian preschool. They are operating now already at their physical capacity. So adding building space seems to be the only way to expand. They say their particular strength is that they include ‘special needs’ children in their preschool, which has added to its popularity. And somehow the two groups of children are blended together successfully. I do not know the details, however. My experience of ‘special needs’ children in my elementary school many, many years ago was that the special needs children were all in a first-floor classroom

which we first graders were not supposed to enter. But there was a whole classroom of ‘special needs’ children similar in age to us, we would notice as we passed by their special classroom. However, we never got to meet those children.

John’s brief description of Jesus as “the One lifting the missing of the system,” poses a challenge for all of us. How do we ‘lift the missing of the system’ as disciples of Christ? Who are the outsiders which society may have excluded, and how can we as Christians lift and include them? This of course is not just about twenty-first century medical care, it is about every aspect of our

lives which need to refocus on ‘lifting others’ to Christ’s Kingdom on earth as we will find in God’s kingdom in heaven. Jesus said, “in my Father’s kingdom there are many rooms”. What does his comment mean to us in our daily context? And how is the love of Christ extended to all our ‘rooms’?

The writer of the New Testament letter called First John, in Chapter 4, Verse 20, says, “So how can we love God if we don’t love the people we can see?” And, “if we say we love God and don’t love each other, we are liars.” Strong words, aren’t they?

And in Chapter 5, Verse 2, of First John we read, “If we love and obey God, we know that we will love his children.” But then that begs the question, ‘Who are God’s children?’ God’s children are those who (quote) “can defeat the world,” meaning those who defeat the evil one prowling around in the world.

That gives us a direction for evangelism. We are speaking of God’s love through Jesus Christ—born, died, risen and ascended into heaven—and those who accept what we say as truth, them we have gained as new followers of Christ. Our job is not to have to get the ‘story of Christ’ exactly right, but

to tell the truth that Jesus Christ came from God and has returned to God, and indeed that Jesus Christ himself is God.

So, in case you ever think you are lesser than or even greater than anyone else made by God, think twice, as the same one who made them made us. We humans are all made in the likeness of God.

So, here is where we show God our love: we show God our love by loving all those whom God has created. And maybe, just maybe, by our humble service, someone else may find their value as a child of God, and then Christ's kingdom is multiplied many

fold as they too begin to love and serve the Spirit of God in others.

<https://sermonwriter.com/sermons/new-testament-john-129-42-come-and-see-go-and-tell-mclarty/>

Let me invite you first to put your faith in Jesus. Study his teachings. Follow his example. Come to know him daily as your Lord and Savior. Experience the joy of new life through a close and intimate relationship with him. Come and see. Then go and tell. Share your faith with others – what you've learned, what you know to be true, what

you've experienced in your own life.

Witness to him, not only with words, but deeds of loving service – and not only by what you do, but by what you refuse to do.

Make no apology: Jesus died for the sins of the world and rose from the dead to offer the promise of new life, through faith in him.

Come and see, then go and tell.

Amen.

More stories:

I read a story about a woman who went to a pet store to purchase a parrot to keep her company. She picked out a beautiful bird that was supposed to be the smartest type of parrot alive. This parrot was guaranteed to be easy to train to talk. She bought a book on training parrots that claimed the technique taught would have her parrot talking within a week. She took the book and her new pet home.

A week went by and she returned to the pet store and complained, “I’ve followed the book explicitly but that parrot you sold me hasn’t said a word yet!”

The storekeeper was puzzled and asked, “Does it have a mirror? Parrots like to be able to look at themselves in the mirror.” So, she bought the mirror and returned home.

Two days later she was back, announcing that the bird still wasn’t saying anything. The storekeeper thought about it for a moment and then said, “What about a ladder? Some parrots enjoy walking up and down a ladder.” So, she bought a ladder and returned home.

Sure enough, two days later she was back with the same story, the parrot still wasn’t talking. “Does the parrot have a swing?

Birds enjoy relaxing on a swing.” So, she bought the swing and went home.

Well, the very next day she returned to the store and announced that the bird had died.

The storekeeper was visibly upset and said, “I’m terribly sorry to hear that!” And then he asked, “Did the bird ever say **ANYTHING** before it died?”

“Yes,” said the lady. “Just as it keeled over dead, it said, ‘Don’t they sell any food down there?’”

<https://sermonwriter.com/sermons/new-testament-john-129-42-called-and-chosen-strayhorn/>

PEJUL93 Ernest Campbell, faculty of Union Theological Seminary, New York, submitted by Dicky Love+”

Evelyn May was near death with cancer. Distraught, her four-year-old daughter, Barbara, climbed up on her father’s lap and asked him about her mother’s illness. In order to calm and reassure the child her father, Bob, began to tell her a story each

night. It was the same story about a reindeer, but each evening the story expanded. On a cold December night in 1938 he told his daughter about an odd-looking reindeer, named Rudolf, who lived with Santa. The reindeer was small, and his voice was weak.

As Bob's story grew, so did his curiosity about reindeer. One evening he went to the Chicago zoo. The neon lights along the shoreline of Michigan Avenue illuminated the fog covering the lake. Rudolf was now given a red nose that acted like a fog light. After her mother's death Barbara made a

book of the story. A book that she showed everyone.

Bob worked for Montgomery Ward as an advertising copywriter. Stewell Avery, the chairman of the board, became aware of the story and wanted to know more about it. The reindeer angel would capture the hearts of his shoppers during the Christmas holiday season. He had the book expanded and in 1939 published Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Avery gave the book away to shoppers. By the time World War II broke out, over six million copies were freely given to customers. But then the giveaway stopped. The name Rudolph sounded too

German, and it appeared that Montgomery Ward was not fully supporting the war effort.

After the war the book was no longer used as a holiday giveaway gift but was sold year-round. The book, a worldwide best seller, had many product deals. Rudolf appeared on jigsaw puzzles, socks, shoes watches and stuffed animals. Rudolf was even displayed in banks and other businesses.

By this time Bob had remarried, and his new brother-in-law, Johnny Marks, was a song writer. Bob allowed Johnny to create a musical version of the story. The song was

rejected by everyone, except for one man, Gene Autry, who was known as the “singing cowboy.” Unlike other artists, Gene and his wife Dinah had children in their home.

Also, cowboy star Gene Autry had a strong following among children. Gene recorded the song in 1949, and it sold two million copies that year.

<https://www.sermonsuite.com/emphasis-preaching-journal/sermon-illustrations-epiphany-2-ordinary-time-2-2020>

Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer

Psalm 40

1 I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

2 He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

4 Happy are those who make the Lord their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods.

5 You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you.

Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted.

6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

7 Then I said, “Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

8 I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

9 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O Lord.

10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

11 Do not, O Lord, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

12 For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.

13 Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me.

14 Let all those be put to shame and confusion who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who desire my hurt.

15 Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, Aha!”

16 But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, “Great is the Lord!”

17 As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.

<https://www.sermonsuite.com/emphasis-preaching-journal/sermon-illustrations-epiphany-2-ordinary-time-2-2020>

John 1:29-42

John Gutenberg was a goldsmith from Mainz in southern Germany. In his spare time, he experimented with developing a printing press that could mass produce literature. He secretly worked on this project for many years, making slow

advances as he experimented with new ideas.

In 1437, Gutenberg relocated to Strasburg. In 1439, the city was planning to exhibit its collection of relics from Emperor Charlemagne, but the event was delayed by one year due to a severe flood and the money for the exhibit had already been spent and could not be repaid. When the question of satisfying the investors came up, Gutenberg promised to share a “secret.” It has been widely speculated that this secret may have been the idea of printing with movable type.

Gutenberg first began the development of his moveable type printing press in 1436. Having previously worked as a professional goldsmith, Gutenberg made skillful use of his knowledge of metals that he had learned as a craftsman. He was the first to make type from an alloy of lead, tin and antimony, which was critical for producing durable type that produced high-quality printed books and proved to be better suited for printing than all other known materials. To create these lead types, Gutenberg used what is considered one of his most ingenious inventions, a special matrix enabling the quick and precise molding of new type

blocks from a uniform template. His type case is estimated to have contained around 290 separate letter boxes, most of which were required for special characters, ligatures and punctuation marks.

Prior to the Gutenberg press, everything that people read had to be copied by hand or printed from hand-carved wooden blocks.

The Gutenberg press followed the design of the screw-type wine presses of the Rhine Valley. Under the Gutenberg system, individual letters were composed into words, locked into wooden forms and inked. The paper was then pressed against the raised surface with the screw device. The only

time restraint was changing each piece of paper to be printed. And unlike the old woodblock prints, these same pieces of type could be rearranged and used over and over again to quickly print a different text.

By 1450, the press was in operation, and a German poem was printed. It was possibly the first item to be printed on the Gutenberg press. Gutenberg continued to print pamphlets and poems as he worked on printing his first book.

It is not clear when Gutenberg conceived the Bible project, but for this he borrowed more money. The work on the Bible began in 1452. At the same time, the press was

also printing other more lucrative texts.

There is also some speculation that there may have been two presses, one for the pedestrian texts, and one for the Bible. One was for profit-making and the other was for Gutenberg's dream project.

In 1455 Gutenberg completed his 42-line Bible, known as the Gutenberg Bible.

About 180 copies were printed. This was the first book to be printed in quantity. The Bible was published in two-volumes. The Gutenberg Bible was sold at the Frankfurt Book Fair. The book cost three times what the average worker earned in a year. Less

than fifty copies of the Gutenberg Bible remain with us today.

Having borrowed money to finance his inventive enterprise, Gutenberg could never pay back his investors and in 1468 he died in debt. To regain their investment, the investors confiscated the pamphlets and books that Gutenberg published.

<https://apnews.com/93857f4015ab6510b8e57e159814dd4e>

Gutenberg Bible Sold for Record \$5.39
Million

October 22, 1987

NEW YORK (AP) _ A Gutenberg Bible was sold at auction Thursday for \$5.39 million, more than double the previous record for a printed book, Christie's auction house said.

The Bible, printed in 1455 in Mainz, Germany, is one of 48 surviving of the 185 believed to have been printed at least in part by Johann Gutenberg. The Bibles, the first books printed by movable type, heralded the age of mass communication.

The buyer, in spirited bidding, was Maruzen Co. Ltd. of Tokyo, Japan's biggest bookseller, said Christie's spokeswoman Lily Zimmermann. The previous record was

\$2.2 million for a Gutenberg sold by Christie's in 1978, she said.”



People also ask:

What was the value of the last Gutenberg Bible sold?

“The last sale of a complete Gutenberg Bible took place in 1978, which sold for \$2.2 million. This copy is now in Stuttgart. The price of a complete copy today is estimated at \$25–35 million. Individual leaves now sell for \$50,000–\$150,000,

depending upon condition and the desirability of the page.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutenberg Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutenberg_Bible)

Gutenberg Bible – Wikipedia

= = = = =

“Sharing God’s Love”

Description: Christ invites us to come to him as we are. He sees our innate value as being above all other created things. We are loved and valued by God so we can love and value others.

Tags: Cathedral, rocks, value, Gutenberg, Bible, system, parrot, Rudolph, reindeer, Gene Autry, Andrew, Peter, Cephas, Martin, King, German, special needs, children, cancer, Mays, store, Chicago, Titanic, John, Baptist, love, God, Jesus, Christ, Christians, press, preschool, General, Lee