



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Epiphany 5 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • February 9, 2025



### Collect for Epiphany 5

O Lord, our heavenly Father, keep your household the Church continually in your true religion, that we who trust in the hope of your heavenly grace may always be defended by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

### Readings for the Epiphany 5

Judges 6:11-24  
Psalm 85  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11

**I will harken to what the Lord God will say,  
for He shall speak peace unto His people, and  
to His saints, that they turn not again.**

Good morning! I hope you are all looking forward to a delightful afternoon of football on this Super Bowl Sunday. I enjoy watching football most when the teams are evenly matched and the outcome remains in doubt until the very last minute of play. And that may very well be what we see this afternoon. Fortunately, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ does not keep us in suspense until the last minute of our lives. His sacrifice on the Cross for the sin of the world was full, perfect, and sufficient for all and for ever. We need only to, as Paul said in today's Epistle, "hold fast to the word" and not believe "in vain."

At the same time, we are called to join with other Christians in community both in our worship and in our ministry in the world. And that requires some organization, reporting, and record-keeping, all of which come before us in our Annual Church Meeting. Much as I would rather be watching the game, the Lord has called us into the community known as the Anglican Church of the Epiphany and we all have a part to play. Remember two weeks ago Paul talked about the members of the community being like organs of the human body. Each must be functioning properly for the body to maintain health and fulfill its call to ministry. That means all of us with all our different spiritual gifts. Our readings today reinforced that point, especially the Old Testament reading from Judges, chapter 6.

The reading began with v. 11, but we really need to go back and read from v. 1 to grasp

the context. Essentially, the people were being terrorized by the Midianites, an ordeal which God was letting happen because of their ongoing disobedience. To avoid seizure of their crops by the Midianites, the people had to go underground, that is, to do their threshing in hiding. That's what we find Gideon doing at the beginning of today's reading when the angel of the Lord greets him. Now in some ways, Gideon may be representative of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, because the first thing he did was ask why this terror at the hands of the Midianites was happening. This was in verse 13. Sound familiar? We often ask, "Lord, if you love us so much, why is there so much hate in the world? Why did the airliner and the helicopter collide in our nation's capital last week" (as if it was all God's fault)? The angel gave Gideon the same response that God often gives us when we complain, telling us to do something about it. Verse 14, "And the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?'" Again, Gideon's answer in verse 15 was much the same as ours. In essence Gideon replied, "Who, me?" And then, even though he already had the benefit of God's verbal assurance, Gideon asked for a sign, to confirm that he wasn't seeing things or imagining all of it. God responded, and His acceptance of Gideon's offering to Him was dramatic indeed. Finally, then, Gideon goes forth in obedience and delivers the people from the oppression of the Midianites. The entire story runs through chapter 8 of Judges, and I commend it to you for your leisure reading, perhaps during the halftime show. I promise you that Judges chapters 6-8 will be much more enlightening, and maybe even more entertaining.

At the same time, I do not mean to encourage anyone to imitate Gideon by asking for a sign. That can be a lot like putting God to the test - a risky proposition at best. That is not to say that God is no longer acting supernaturally like in the reading. Miracles still happen. God still makes His presence known. Spiritual gifts like tongues and interpretation are still common. I know from experiencing them. They are all real and they are all active even in the Anglican Church today.

Paul's testimony to receiving the gospel by revelation as set forth in today's Epistle is as powerful now as when it was written back in the First Century. The challenge for us is still to pay attention and listen with open hearts and minds so as to respond when God calls, however it is that His call comes to us.

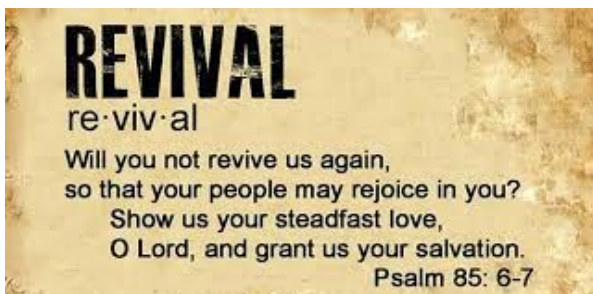
The encounter between Jesus and Peter in today's Gospel reading from Luke chapter 5 illustrates what I mean. Even though this was early on in Luke's Gospel account, it wasn't Peter's first encounter with Jesus. In the preceding chapter of the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had visited Simon Peter's home after one Sabbath worship and had healed Peter's mother-in-law. I'm sure Peter was thankful for that. Just like today, homes back then were no doubt much more peaceful with a mother-in-law who was happy and healthy. But that was nothing in comparison to the miracle of the great catch of fish! Healing someone's high fever was pretty special, but catching a whole boat load of fish, in broad daylight, after Peter hadn't caught anything all night long! Now in any fisherman's eyes that was a really remarkable miracle, and one Peter could readily relate to. It struck him so intensely that he was immediately convicted, v. 8, ". . . he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" Just like Gideon and Paul, Peter knew in the depth of his soul his complete and utter unworthiness in the sight of God. But just like with Gideon and Paul, God used him anyway, and told him, together with James and John, at the end of v. 10, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

Each of these, Gideon, Paul, and Peter, had a face-to-face encounter with the living God and we are able to read their stories in Holy Scripture. Gideon, a timid and oppressed dirt farmer. Paul, a religious leader, educated in the faith and the traditions. Peter, a small businessman. As a group they are just about as diverse as we are here in Southern New Mexico, aren't they? Yet God used each of them. Gideon routed the Midianites with weapons no more

deadly than torches and trumpets. Paul became a great evangelist and writer. Peter became the head of the early Church. Scripture is full of stories of those who encountered God in some fashion and then went forth from that encounter. Some went forth in denial, some in sorrow, some went forth with blood on their hands, some with the glory of God. Of those last, none of them were ever the same again, men, women, young, old, Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, none of them were ever the same. What mattered wasn't where they were or who they were when they encountered the living, loving God. What mattered was who they then loved and how - no - whom they served thereafter.

Many of us have already encountered the living, loving God in some dramatic way. So let us take a minute to consider how the next encounter might happen. First, are we likely to recognize Him? And second, once recognition does happen, how will we respond? Specifically, will we be able to open our hearts to receive the fullness of His perfect love that knows no bounds? I have come to believe that this is the best part! And then will we be ready and willing for Him to use us as He sees fit, even to use us to tell our story whenever and wherever we may be called? Our story has now become part of His story, and who knows - any of us may help place a key piece in somebody's puzzle, without even realizing it at the time. Who knows how and when He might use any one of us or use our community of faith? So first, and most importantly, is our worship. And then we meet to do business today.

In doing so we pray,  
Come, Lord Jesus, Come.  
AMEN  
Fr. Frank



### **Prayer List - 2/9/25**

Iglesia de Jesus, Jesus es la Resurreccion,  
Aguascalientes  
Rev. Maria Del Rayo Jimenez Victoria,  
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendez,  
Deacon Roger Griffin  
  
Bishop Steven and Tricia

### **Those who need your healing care and strength:**

Donya Conine  
Wayne Conine Jr.  
Donna Haynes  
Walter Ford  
Luis and Kelle Senge  
Harry & Vivian Toepfer  
Ellie  
Rev. Shelby Moon  
Esther & Joel Fyock  
Cheeta Mc Murray  
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendes

### **Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa  
Creed Napier, US Air Force,  
J.W. Grove, US Navy  
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-McChord  
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong  
Wyatt Green, US Navy

### **We pray for our Epiphany family:**

#### **Boots Steward**

Frank and Carolyn Wilson; the Zima family,  
Jeff Jessup  
Dwight and Marge Harp;  
Rosie Henry; Kym; Tammy  
Bert and Judy Hungerford

## Lessons for Epiphany 5

February 9, 2025

Anglican Lectionary

year C

### Old Testament Reading

#### Judges 6:11-24

11 Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor." 13 And Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 And the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" 15 And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." 16 And the Lord said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man." 17 And he said to him, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me." 18 Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay till you return." 19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a young goat and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the terebinth and presented them. 20 And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour the broth over them." And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes. And fire sprang up from the rock and consumed

the meat and the unleavened cakes. And the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." 23 But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and called it, The Lord Is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

#### Psalm 85

1 LORD, you have been gracious to your land; \*  
you have turned away the captivity of Jacob.

2 You have forgiven the offence of your people \*  
and covered all their sins.

3 You have taken away all your displeasure \*  
and turned yourself from your wrathful  
indignation.

4 Restore us then, O God our Savior, \*  
and let your anger cease from us.

5 Will you be displeased at us for ever, \*  
and will you stretch out your wrath from one  
generation to another?

6 Will you not turn again and quicken us, \*  
that your people may rejoice in you?

7 Show us your mercy, O LORD, \*  
and grant us your salvation.

8 I will hearken to what the LORD God will say, \*  
for he shall speak peace unto his people, and  
to his saints, that they turn not again.

9 For his salvation is near to those who fear him, \*  
that glory may dwell in our land.

10 Mercy and truth have met together; \*  
righteousness and peace have kissed each  
other.



## Psalm 85 Continued

11 Truth shall flourish out of the earth, \*  
and righteousness shall look down from  
heaven.

12 Indeed, the LORD shall show goodness, \*  
and our land shall give its increase.

13 Righteousness shall go before him, \*  
and he shall direct his going in the way.

## New Testament Reading

### 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

**15** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **6** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **8** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. **9** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. **11** Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

## The Holy Gospel

### Luke 5:1-11

**5** On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, **2** and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. **3** Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. **4** And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." **5** And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." **6** And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. **7** They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. **8** But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." **9** For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, **10** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." **11** And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

