

## Second Sunday after Epiphany January 18, 2026

### Prayer of the Day

Holy God, our strength and our redeemer, by your Spirit hold us forever, that through your grace we may worship you and faithfully serve you, follow you and joyfully find you, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

**Words to ponder during time after Epiphany:** *“This is my Son, the beloved with whom I am well pleased”* Matthew 3:17

### Gospel: 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! 30 This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” 32 And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I 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.’ 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One.”

35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38 When 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?” 39 He 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. 40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). 42 He 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).

### *A few thoughts as Sunday approaches....*

Somewhere along the way, we got it into our noggins that the four Gospels are simply four re-tellings of the story of Jesus; God among us. Careful readers notice

that timelines didn't always match up or even that some events were included in one Gospel and omitted in others. These observations have led to valiant and misdirected efforts to figure out how to 'harmonize' all the Gospels so every detail 'dovetails' with all others. These attempts to "harmonize" lead to an incomplete picture of Jesus shown to us in scripture.

To cut this little history lesson short, suffice it to say that when we read from Matthew one week and John the next, we really need to let each Gospel speak its own truth while holding the others alongside.

John's Gospel is replete with words that hold many layers of meaning. To speak about the "Lamb of God" is to look at many ways Jesus is the lamb of God. To hear John proclaim that Jesus takes away the sin (singular) of the world (another word with several meanings) requires that we pay attention to what John means by "sin". We get *there* by paying attention to a word John's Gospel uses forty times; a word often translated as 'abide' or remain (inexplicably I feel compelled to write the transliterated word from the Greek *meno*).

Abiding and remaining are all about relationship. At Jesus baptism, Spirit descends and *remains*. The first would-be disciples ask Jesus where he is staying (abiding or remaining). Instead of providing GPS coordinates or a street address Jesus invites them to come and see where he remains, how he lives and what he stands for.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus speaks repeatedly to his followers about 'remaining' and abiding. Even as he speaks of his life's end and assures his followers that he goes to prepare a place beyond this life; a place he where promises he will be with us and we with him (guess which word John uses here!).

This word study is meant to lead us right back to John bearing witness that Jesus is Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus confronts anything and everything that would preclude the relationship (abiding and remaining) between God and humanity. This understanding of "sin" inevitably brings us to the way John's Gospel uses the word "belief".

The word is always a verb...not a one and done verbal declaration or document signing about what we think we know or accept as true. Belief in John's Gospel is all about living in relationship. Remember the famous verse about "whoever believes has everlasting life" (yet another phrase with multiple layers of meaning)? Remember the beginning of John's Gospel that declares that the essence of God becomes human and makes his home among us?

Another way of taking John's Gospel on its own terms is to recall when it was written and to whom. The other three Gospels had already been in circulation by the time John's Gospel is told and later written down. John's words are directed to Jewish folk who believed that God's ancient promises were embodied in Jesus—their belief created estrangement from their own faith tradition and community. So John speaks to a people who likely felt lost, disconnected and dispossessed. His words about relationship (*abide, remain, belief*) likely resonated in particular ways with this community. Imagine living as these these folk did and hearing someone recount John the Baptizer (some scholars like to note he is also John the Witness) say, "*See there! That's the one! That's God's incarnate self among us, with us and for us...all of us!*"

A few things to ponder....

How are we living witnesses to God among us and in the world?

What does it mean for us to believe?

How does the church and how do individuals "remain/abide" with Jesus?

What does Jesus' abiding and remaining with us know look like?