

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Second Sunday of the Epiphany (A)

Isaiah 49.1-7

Psalm 40.1-12

1 Corinthians 1.1-9

John 1.29-42

Isaiah 49.1-7

1. The tone and content of Isaiah shifts at ch. 49. The address is no longer to Israel or Jacob, but now to Zion and Jerusalem.
 - a. A shift occurs to a more universal appeal, with the subject of exodus and salvation now being applied to all who serve God.
2. In these verses the prophet focuses on his call as a new call to all peoples. This section presages an announcement of a new exodus (49.8-13) and of salvation for Zion (49.14-26).
 - a. The prophet's recitation that he has been called in his mother's womb echoes that of Jeremiah (Jer. 1.5).
 - b. God's sets His chosen ones on their pathway from before their birth.
3. The mission to Israel and Jacob is now universalized: "I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
 - a. God's call is not just that all turn to Him, but that those who do so reach out to all others, that they too may turn.

Psalm 40.1-12

1. This section of this psalm comprises an individual hymn of thanksgiving.
 - a. The psalmist cannot restrain himself from praising the LORD.
 - i. This psalm has been seen, traditionally, as a type of the praise offered by Gentiles who have been called to God.
2. The "new song" referred to in v. 3 has been interpreted to include many of the canticles used in worship. This interpretation has built upon the theme of the call to the Gentiles, for the psalm itself continues in v. 3 that "many shall see, and stand in awe".
 - a. The confession of God is outward-reaching. The love of the LORD is to be evangelical in character.

1 Corinthians 1.1-9

1. In writing to the Corinthians Paul is addressing a congregation of privilege. Corinth was a rich trading city, and the Christians gathered there struggled with the problems associated with reconciling their Christian calling with the calls of the world.
 - a. Paul therefore begins his address by emphasizing to the Corinthian Christians that they are "called to be saints".
 - i. Paul does not mean that the Corinthians are holy, but that they have been set apart by God.
 - ii. He also points out that the Corinthians enjoy no special call over that received by all believers.

2. The letter's opening continues with a thanksgiving (vv. 4-9), which is a traditional format for an ancient letter.
 - a. The basis of Paul's gratitude is God's grace as mediated by Jesus Christ.
3. Paul points out to the Corinthians that they do not lack in the gifts which God bestows, but that this grace allows them to *wait*.
 - a. The Corinthians tended to excitement, expecting an imminent Second Coming, and so Paul seeks to calm them down.
 - i. God will strengthen those whom He has called.

John 1.29-42

1. Having opened with the great hymn to the Word, John's Gospel continues with the testimony of John the Baptist, and now focuses on the Lamb of God and on the call of the first disciples.
 - a. Andrew becomes the first evangelist, for he tells his brother, "We have found the Messiah."
2. In contrast to the accounts of Jesus' baptism found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, in John the testimony is of Jesus' baptism by the Holy Spirit.
3. John's Gospel does not stress that Jesus has atoned for our sins, and thus John the Baptist's testimony that the "lamb of God" takes away our sins reflects a tradition older than the writing of the Gospel.
 - a. John uses the verb *menein* in describing the Spirit "resting" on Jesus. This is a word which connotes indwelling.
 - i. John emphasizes the relationship between the Father and the Son, and between the Son and His believers.
 - ii. This same verb is used to refer to disciples "remaining" with Jesus, *i.e.*, there is a mutual indwelling.
4. Andrew and Peter are identified as disciples of John the Baptist. They follow Jesus both in response to His call and in response to the testimony of John the Baptist.