



## **Second Sunday after Epiphany and Martin Luther King Jr. Day January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

### **Drawn In!**



**Martin Luther King, arrested in the early days of his civil rights ministry**

**In this period during January and February, after the Day of Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the mission with which the Christian Church is entrusted becomes the point of focus. What does it mean to be on mission? How do the times in which we live, shape our understanding of mission? How should we respond to them? This week we begin at the beginning: the moment and process of conversion: that time when we experience being drawn in toward the figure of Jesus. January 15<sup>th</sup>, is also Martin Luther King Jr Day in the US, when the Christian churches think about the legacy of King and his own experience of Christian conversion. Most of the photos that today see of King reflect that time when his ministry was at its peak. This reflects how we look back at him in the light of history, crediting him with a good part of the success of the civil rights movement: in itself a result of the best of progressive Christianity. This photo depicts him in the early days of his work, in a white-only bar, when his profile was much lower and when the authorities did with him as they wished.**

## GATHERING

### We light the Christ Candle

In the name of the Father  
 In the name of the Son  
 In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with  
***And also with you***

Jesus Christ has been given us as light:  
 Light who exposes the darkness for what it is,  
***Light who displays to us what justice and peace look like***  
 Light who enables us to live thoughtfully and courageously,

***This is the mission of the Christian church!***

**Let's Sing: Sing of the Lord's Goodness (TiS 183, The Lord's Goodness, Ernest Sands)**

### **A Meditation Upon Being 'Drawn In': the Slow but Insistent Conversion Experience of Many**

This is a prayer that attempts through my own experience – and as I have gathered over time, the experience of many others – to reflect upon the God who never lets go, the God who draws us in patiently, the God who beckons us with the words, “come and see”!

Becoming Christian was not something high on my agenda.  
 I struggled with the experience of finding myself  
 drawn to the Christian thing,  
 but at the same time overwhelmed by an illogical sense of calling:

***Lord God, you never give up, you never let go as you invite us to come and see.***

I kept trying to figure it out,  
 get a grasp on the whole,  
 put faith in a context which was rational and reasonable

***Lord God you never give up, you never let go.***

Meanwhile, my soul rolled with the upheaval  
 happening inside  
 for which I had no language  
 to order, organize, control the movements:

***Lord God, you never give up.***

Come and see!

***What else can I do?***

**The Peace**

### **Introduction**

In this season of Epiphany, the theme is all about the light of Christ and the way it draws us in, attracts us, in a sense, seduces us. Epiphany is also about the process of being drawn in, of conversion, and the way our lives are turned upside down: both in terms of worldview and lifestyle. Indeed, the test of genuine conversion to the Light, is how we actually see the world and live in it, as vehicles of compassion and generosity, love and justice: often a dangerous thing, if we take it seriously.

## **LET'S HEAR THE WORD**

### **Some Anecdotal Insights about Christian Conversion**

“Conversion isn't, after all, a moment: It's a process, and it keeps happening, with cycles of acceptance and resistance, epiphany and doubt.”

**Sara Miles**

“The world does not consist of 100 percent Christians and 100 percent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.”

**C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity**

“What is a saint supposed to do, if not convert wolves...not be one?”

**Umberto Eco, How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays**

Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better. **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**Isaiah 49:1-7 (New Revised Standard Version)**

Pam Mayrick

In Isaiah, there are four so called “servant passages”: this is the second one. In Isaiah 49 the servant speaks about his calling from God. He has a sense of being called before he was born. This is fairly characteristic of Hebrew poetic and mystical thought, which often retrospectively sees the origins of a significant person’s work and life grounded in his or her conception. We see the same idea in the servant language about the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5). The language in this reading is interesting in as much as the servant describes himself as a weapon, a sharp sword, a polished arrow. This seems aggressive, violent, language and to that extent is open to misinterpretation. The idea here is that words and servant-hood are the things that overcome adversaries: there is a sense of the power of God that can move people and impregnable social and political structures and situations when nothing else can. The servant, who remains nameless here, and to whom Christians look as Jesus of Nazareth, also moves people, structures and situations through compassion, gentleness and quietness as he brings justice to the nations (Isa 42:1-3).

49 Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother’s womb he named me. <sup>2</sup>He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. <sup>3</sup>And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” <sup>4</sup>But I said, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God.” <sup>5</sup>And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— <sup>6</sup>he says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

<sup>7</sup>Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, “Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate

themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

**John 1:29-42 (New Revised Standard Version)**

Rob Mayrick

There is always a lot happening in John's Gospel. But out of the complexity there arises clarity: that in Jesus we encounter the invitation of God to us, to belong. That belonging is not static, but dynamic: a relationship with an agenda, that we all may have life, abundant life, life full of meaning in a reconstructed world, marked by justice. The obverse is also clear: John envisages not just a world marked by the forgiveness of sin, but its very eradication: the eradication of violence, injustice and evil as we become more divine, reflecting the character of God. In this passage, Jesus as the Lamb of God is the means through which reconstruction begins. The idea of the lamb has two connotations in the Bible: the first is the idea of the lamb who will emerge victorious over God's enemies, overcoming oppression and injustice. The second is the idea of the Passover lamb, the idea of Jesus' sacrifice for our deliverance. John tends to emphasize the former rather than the latter, running with the concept of victory. The other dimension of the passage (vs 35-42) which is crucial to us about our response: our being drawn to the man Jesus, the lamb who represents and generates peaceable-ness, which itself is a powerful, muscular challenge to what today we call "redemptive violence": a widespread existential and political practice

<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup>And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup>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.' <sup>34</sup>And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." <sup>35</sup>The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

<sup>38</sup>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?" <sup>39</sup>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.

<sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). <sup>42</sup>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).

The Gospel of the Lord  
***Praise to you Lord Christ***

### **Hymn: We are Called (David Haas)**

Come! live in the light!  
 Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!  
 We are called to be light for the kingdom,  
 to live in the freedom of the city of God!

#### **Refrain:**

*We are called to act with justice.*  
*We are called to love tenderly.*  
*We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.*

Come! Open your heart!  
 Show your mercy to all those in fear!  
 We are called to be hope for the hopeless,  
 so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

#### **Refrain**

Sing! Sing a new song!  
 Sing of that great day when all will be one!  
 God will reign and we'll walk with each other as sisters  
 and brothers united in love!

#### **Refrain**

**A Conversation with Martin Luther King with the BBC, 1961,  
 recalling his roots in ministry in Montgomery, Alabama and the  
 Montgomery Bus Boycott**

**Some thoughts...**

**Let's Give our Offerings,**

**Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

**Prayer of Dedication**

**Prayers of the People**

Colin Bradford

The one who prays, offers the petition, after each series of prayers "we are people of the light". Our response is "may we become so"!

**Hymn: You have come down to the Lakeshore  
(from the Spanish "Tu has venido a la orilla", Pescador de  
hombres: Cesáreo Gabaraín, New Century Hymnal 173)**

You have come down to the lakeshore  
seeking neither the wise nor the wealthy  
but only asking for me to follow.

**Refrain**

*Jesus, you have looked into my eyes;  
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.  
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;  
now with you I will seek other seas.*

You know full well my possessions  
neither treasure nor weapons for conquest  
just these my fishnets and will for working.

**Refrain**

You need my hands, my exhaustion  
working love for the rest of the weary  
a love that's willing to go on loving

**Refrain**

Tu has venido a la orilla  
no has buscado ni a sabios, ni a ricos,  
tan solo quieres que yo te siga.

### **Refrain in Spanish**

*Jesus, me has mirado a los ojos  
sonriendo, has dicho mi nombre,  
en la arena he dejado mi barca;  
junto a ti buscaré otro mar.*

### **Blessing**

Conversion isn't, after all, a moment:  
It's a process, and it keeps happening,  
with cycles of acceptance and resistance, epiphany and doubt.

Now go into the world in peace;  
be of good courage;  
hold fast to that which is good;  
render to no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak;  
help the afflicted;  
honour everyone.

### ***In the name of Christ***

**Sung Blessing: We are marching in the light of God (TiS 666,  
Siyahamba, South African Traditional, tr, Anders Nyberg)**

**Postlude**

**Pianist:**

Rosemary Osborne